No 48 SEPTEMBER 1991 £1.80

ACE

- AMIGA
- PC
- ST
- MEGADRIVE
- GAMEBOY
- LYNX
- SUPER FAMICOM

ADVANCED COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

AMIGA EXCLUSIVE

LOTUS 2

INSIDE 10 PAGES Of Console Reviews!

Gremlin's gas guzzlin' limit breakin' tyre squealin' SEQUEL!

CHOPPER ASSAULT!

Core's Thunderhawk outguns the enemy.

BALLS!

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker.

EXCLUSIVE! BULLFROGGER

Amazing secrets from the PowerMonger team.

TRICKS 'n' TACTICS

Playguides, pokes and cheats for: Gods, Monkey Island, Super Mario World, Space Quest IV, Prince of Persia, Strider.

LATEST TITLES PREVIEWED & REVIEWED INCLUDING: EYE OF THE STORM, MEGATWINS, THUNDERHAWK, JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER, CASTLES, CENTURION, ALIEN STORM, MAUPITI ISLAND, BEAST BUSTERS, ELF, WILD WHEELS, HATRIS, G-LOC, HALLEY WARS, PACMAN, PSYCHIC WORLD, R-TYPE II & SUPER R-TYPE FACE OFF ...AND MANY, MANY MORE!

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9 770954 807024

MISSION
394-KST-9S
CODENAME
H·U·N·T·E·R

HUN

ADAPT TO SURVIV SE

The Hunter is alone behind enemy lines. With versati
options, and the expertise to complete d ous m

His only accomplices are the weapons, ve and s
dimensional universe; his objective: to attack survive

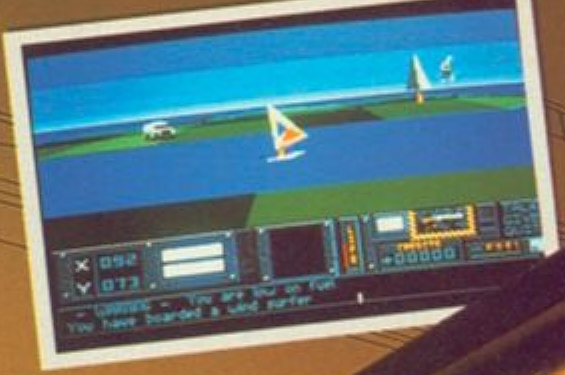
ACTIS

TER

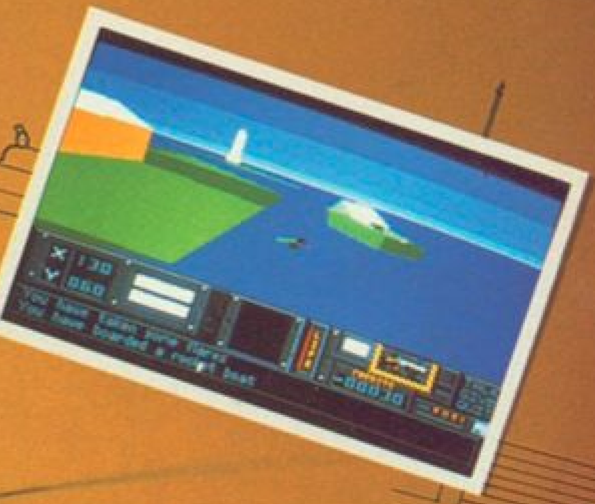
IVE SEEK TO DESTROY.

s. With versatility to make best use of a wide range of
plete da rous missions, the Hunter is a breed apart.

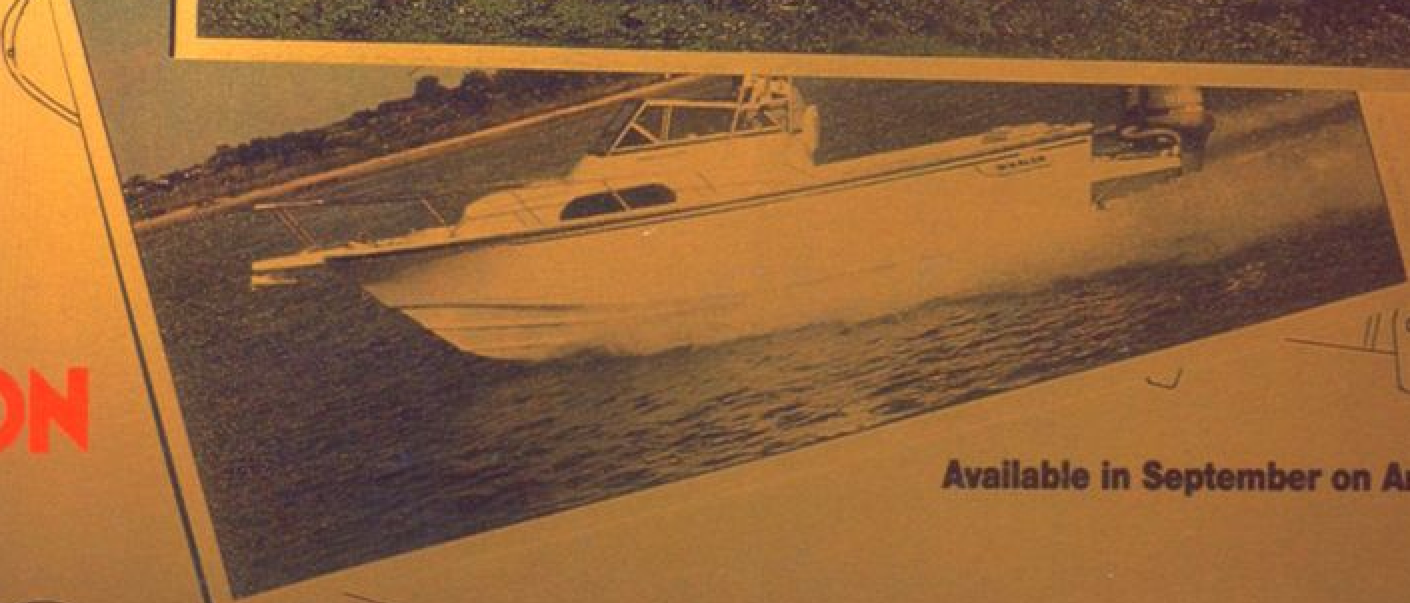
ns, veh s and structures found in his amazing three-
attack survive. The Hunter has the will to win. Do you?



X 092
Y 073
You are now on foot
You have boarded a wind surfer



X 130
Y 060
You have taken some flares
You have boarded a rocket boat



CTIVISION

Available in September on Amiga & Atari ST

48

"Drive,"

She said.

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Special thanks to *Performance Car* magazine for their assistance with this month's Lotus pictures.

reviews

The latest software releases rated

ON COMPUTER AND CONSOLE *pages 51-78*

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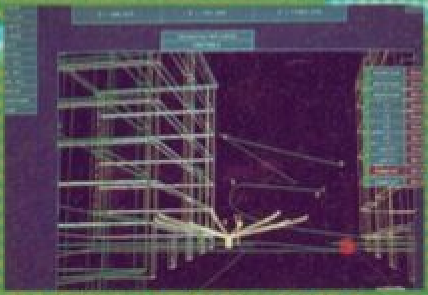
69 **WILD WHEELS** *Ocean*
[illegible] **WHIRLWIND SNOOKER** *Virgin*

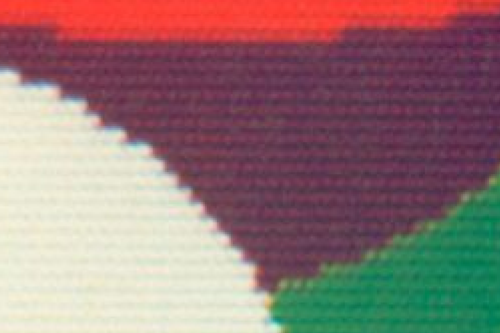
Mega Twins, the dangerously cute Capcom coin-op conversion from top quality coders Tiertex. See how the work is going on page 46.



Digital Pictures a graphic house at work. ACE looks inside and finds some surprising facts about the day to day action. See page 27

The Conference Returns! Roving reporters Dave'n'Steve visit Virgin with the hyper-critical ACE conference team. See page 35

BULLFROGGER



Surely this cannot be. Bullfrog, top developers of brain-games like Populous and PowerMonger long to produce their own Frogger game? What on earth is going on?

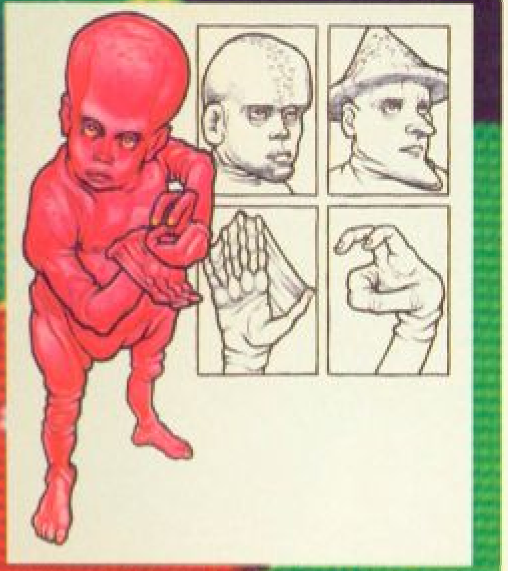
But no. Straight up, on the level, no messing. We're on the up and up. This, dear reader, is the game Bullfrog would really like to produce.

In the first in an occasional series, we ask rated programmers how they would, with the benefit of their silky smooth techniques, put together their favourite games of yesteryear.

Turn to page 86

SHOCK IT TO US!

Odd, isn't it? In the entertainment business these days you can't move for shocks. It's a roaring trade again. What with Patrick Bateman chopping up old flames in *American Psycho,* Henry doing for all and sundry in *Portrait of a Serial Killer* and all yer top rappers singing about flashlights and shootings, the public's appetite for visceral thrills seems boundless. And yet software would appear to be taking definite steps away from this aspect of its supposed sister industries. But is it necessarily a good thing? Shouldn't older gamers have the opportunity to buy games which would pump their adrenalin just a little bit faster? Whatever else you might think, it'd make an interesting change from stacking hats.



The Planet of the Gamers is a frightening place. Too many flight sims and just look what you might end up like...Page 20

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!
Reckon you're a bit of a games expert? Think you could hold your own against some of the finest minds in the country? Well here's your chance to find out, in the ACE Games IQ test. Flex those little grey cells on Page 24

Snooker loopy nuts are we. And so will you be after you've read the review on Page 58.

features

20 **SCARY MONSTERS**
ACE visits the Planet of the Gamers, a strange, disturbed world who's inhabitants have evolved after centuries of playing particular types of games. Anything but a pretty picture, its a white knuckle voyage into the hearts and minds of an alien nation. Well, alright, perhaps not.

24 **QUESTION TIME**
The ACE readers, we know, likes to pride them selves on a higher degree of industry knowledge than most. And here's the chance to prove it.

27 **DIGITAL PICTURES REVISITED**
You've seen their graphics! You've seen their faces! And now you can hear them speak! Intrepid reporter Rovin' Dave Upchurch licks his pencil and asks the questions.

32 **COIN OPS**
John Cook feeds the latest slots and offers his considerable wisdom as to the most recent developments in the field.

35 **VIRGIN CONFERENCE**
Virgin Games open their doors to perhaps the most motley crew of visitors it's ever had the "pleasure" of looking after - ACE readers! Read about their horrible ordeal of free crisps and Coke and goodie bags - if you dare!

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A further three games currently in, if you must, "development" get the critical eye treatment.
● Lotus 2 ● Eye of the Storm ● Mega Twins

REGULARS

7 **ACE GAMES NEWS**
Rik Haynes scours magazines from around the globe, cuts them up and makes up some appropriate captions.

11 **ACE TECH NEWS**
Gadgets, widgets and gizmos. But absolutely no printer cables or disk box holders, thank*you.*

14 **LETTERS**
The write stuff.

84 **TRICKS'n'TACTICS**
This month's lucky games to receive the enviable T'nT treatment are *Gods* from the Bitmaps, *Monkey Island* from US Gold, *Super Mario World* on the Super Famicom, and *Space Quest IV* from Sierra. We'll also be paying a return visit to old friends *Prince of Persia* and *Strider.*

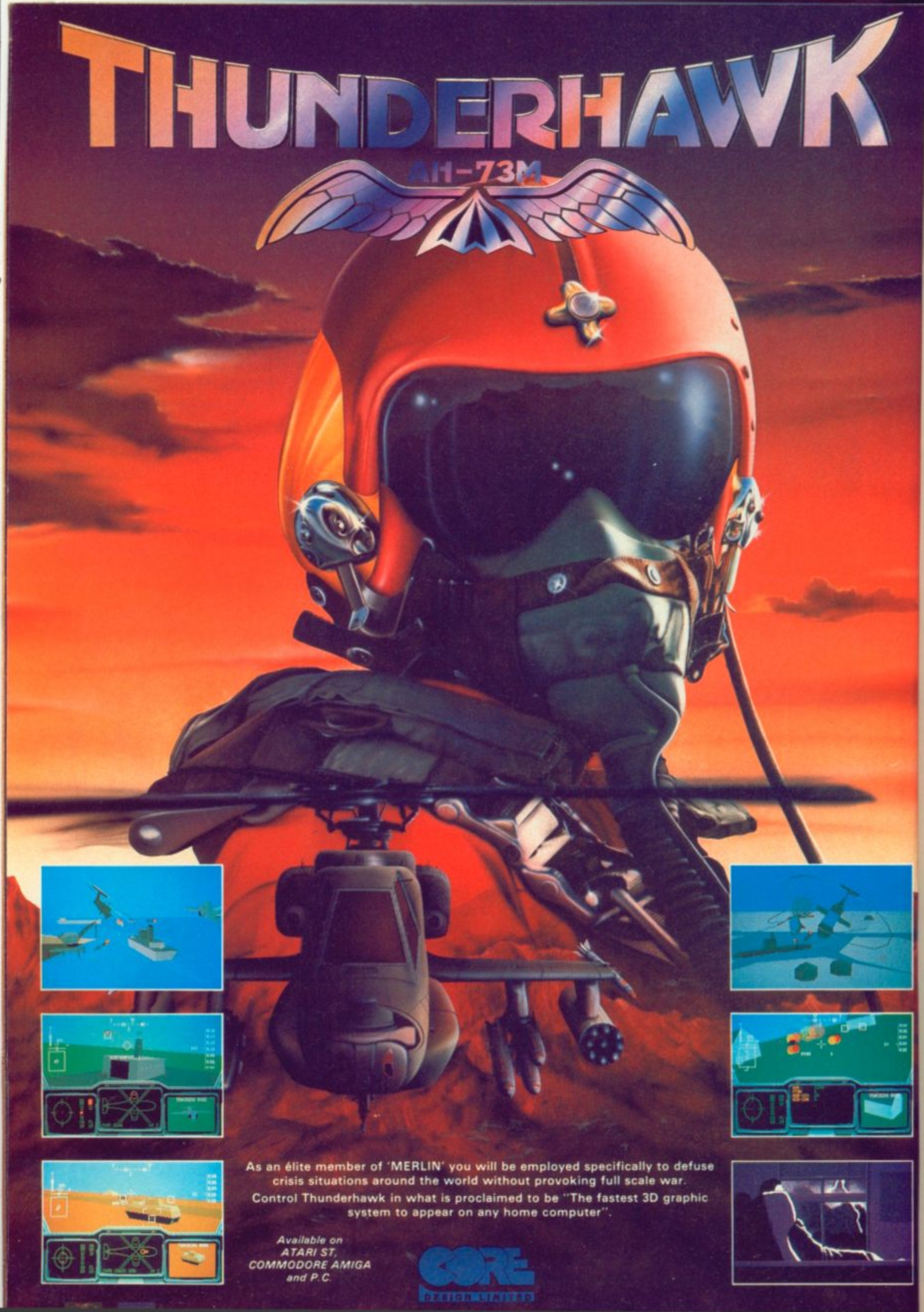
COVER STORY

Lotus 2 may well turn out to be Gremlin's biggest seller to date. But cashing in on last year's success story could easily have turned into this year's nightmare for development team Magnetic Fields.

We talked to the teams at Fields and Gremlin to learn just how they intended to put a new spin on the race genre, and in particular what new elements could be included to improve on their undeniably excellent prequel.

The Feel! The Frantic Bends! The Fog! They're all detailed on page 40.

ACE
SEPTEMBER 1991



As an élite member of 'MERLIN' you will be employed specifically to defuse crisis situations around the world without provoking full scale war.

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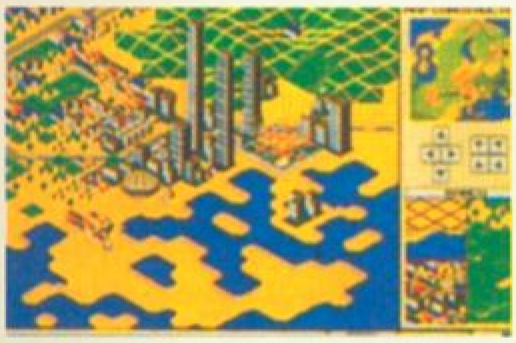
NEWS GAMES
NEWS GAMES

Rik Haynes with more out of this world stories...

Some good news for those players who have already conquered Castles from Interplay and Electronic Arts. An add-on datadisk - packed with extra missions, castles and scenarios - will be out in late September for around £15. EA contends Castles was one of their biggest ever ship-outs for a PC title. Turn to page 56 if you want to find out more...

Take The A-Train

If you're bored with being a Railroad Tycoon, why not take the A-Train? This lively locomotive simulation is steaming its way over from Japan. SimCity creator Maxis has picked up the European and North American rights and is initially working on a PC adaptation which it hopes to release early next year.


Take the A-Train looks somewhat familiar to us Sim City fans, but the recipe's so good, who's complaining? (Many thanks to Japan's Log-In magazine for permission to use this illustration)

Superficially, A-Train from Artdink is the Japanese version of the popular Microprose game - except in Railroad Tycoon you just tried to get rich, with the Maxis release you're trying to be a good city administrator. You have to raise money, buy land, put in your rail and run the trains. Simple, eh?

"This is sort of a living train-set," asserts Maxis boss Jeff Braun, "You can just let it run and see the trains moving around and the buildings growing and shrinking. There's all kinds of detail going on. Keep an eye peeled for the amusement park and ski areas."

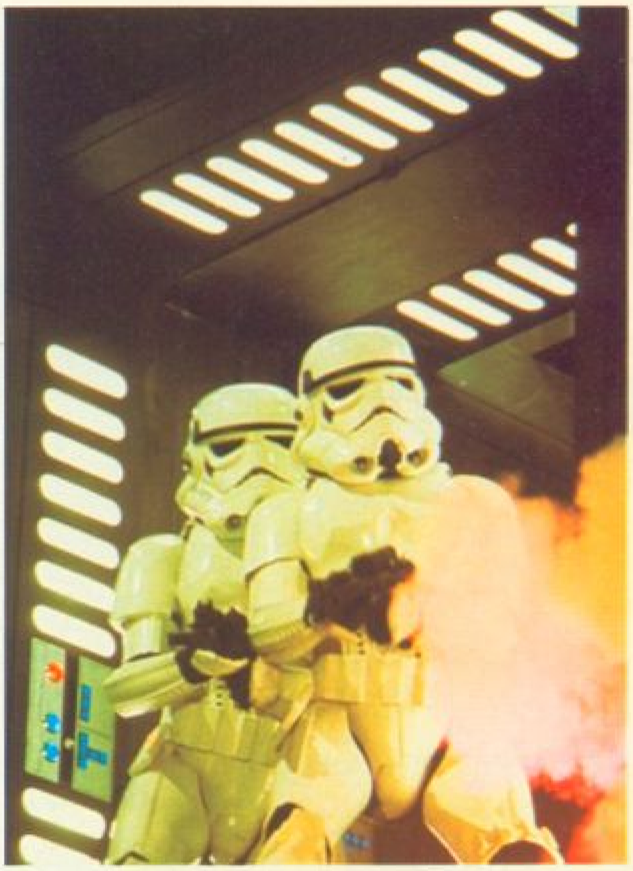
The Rescue Of Princess Blobette

The blob is back! Continuing the story of the award-winning A Boy and His Blob, The Rescue of Princess Blobette for the Gameboy has been licensed by Nintendo itself for release in Europe later this year.

Jellybean-loving alien Blobert and his Earth-boy companion are back in a brand-new adventure taking them to the Royal Castle of Blobolonia. Navigating the traps and secret rooms, the player must rescue the Princess from the clutches of an Antagonistic Alchemist and eat as many jellybeans as possible!

Absolute Entertainment's The Rescue of Princess Blobette is the creation of David Crane. This veteran video games geezer gave us the memorable Pitfall, Ghostbusters and Little Computer People when he worked for Activision. Crane is now completing development of a new Simpsons Gameboy title for Acclaim.

e Boy and Blobert tackle the Antagonist Alchemist on the Game Boy


Star Wars – resurrecting soon on a pixellated screen near you

Star Wars

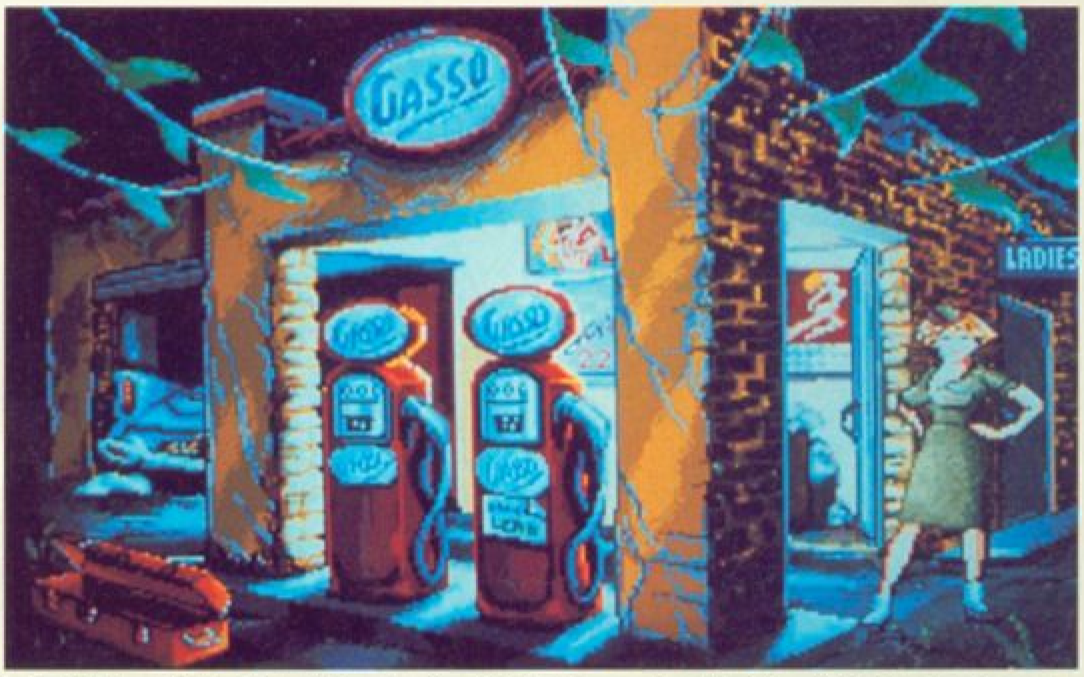
ACE can exclusively reveal Lucasfilm Games in California is secretly working on a Star Wars flight simulation based around the renowned motion picture.

Many of the best designers and programmers at Lucasfilm Games have been assigned to the project which focuses on the rebel X-Wing fighter flown by Luke Skywalker in the original movie. Although development has hardly begun, an insider suggested the game is already looking like a potential blockbuster. He told us the graphics engine found in Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) has been refined beyond recognition and used to create the realistic imaging of Imperial Tie Fighters and Star Destroyers. The Millennium Falcon may even make a special guest appearance along with a few Star Wars characters like R2-D2 and C-3PO.

Lucasfilm Games has previously enjoyed considerable success with Their Finest Hour and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade games for the PC, Amiga and ST. Birmingham-based US Gold handles these prestigious products in the UK. Unfortunately, nobody there could throw any light on the matter of an X-Wing sim.

Sue Seserman at Lucasfilm Games confirmed the existence of the new Star Wars project but added the company isn't 'definitely committed' to it... yet! If the go-ahead is given, PC players could be attacking the Death Star within a year.

Meanwhile, French firm Ubisoft is devising a Star Wars title for the Nintendo Gameboy. Indications are that this handheld game will be similar to the NES console adaption of Star Wars - due for an autumn release from Lucasfilm Games and JVC Musical Industries (see ACE 42 for further details). A spokesperson for Ubisoft said the movie is like a big video game and Star Wars will be one of the most exciting Gameboy titles available.



Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2 from the legendary Steve Meretsky. The concept worked pretty well in text only format – heaven knows what we'll be seeing in the multimedia version

Robocop 3 is coming to the Super NES in the first quarter of 1992 thanks to Ocean. "Join the homeless of Detroit," so the sales-pitch goes, "as they battle the evil Splatterpunks and Rehabs who are trying to level the city. Keiko an eleven-year-old computer wizard will help you and your armaments save the city."

Demon's Gate for PC, Amiga and ST is being described as an 'Ultima-beater' by Gremlin and Imagitec.

Leather Goddesses Of Phobos 2: The Gas Pump Girls

Are you ready to be whip-tickled by the Gas Pump Girls? Activision is set to launch Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2 onto poor unsuspecting PC adventurers. A CD-ROM version is also on the cards.

The state-of-play has dramatically changed since the release of the original game. To compete with the likes of Sierra On-Line and Lucasfilm Games, Activision has enlivened the sequel with 256-colour VGA graphics, 'hundreds of scenes of animation', digitised voices and music, a point-and-click interface and characters which can speak five languages through the usual sound boards. The first Infocom Multimedia Adventure Game has been designed by Steve 'Zork Zero' Meretsky.

Like a typical B-movie, Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2 sees a small '50s American town terrorised by a meteorite and an alien invader. Only the military and a group of attractive gas pump girls can save the day. Ugly girls just couldn't do the job, obviously!

Activision is including a 'Free Life Size Sound Enhancer' widget to play sampled sounds through the parallel port on your PC.

Video games supremo Nintendo is now ranked among the top thirty Japanese companies. Ahead of Nissan Motor, Pioneer Electronic and Japan Airlines. Within grasp of Sony, Fujitsu, NEC, Toshiba and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

Dune

Before he created Twin Peaks, cult director David Lynch attempted an epic sci-fi movie based on a Frank Herbert book. Dune may have had Sting and Spice but the result was confused and catastrophic. With two computer games concurrently in the works, Virgin Games looks set to continue the confusion but hopes that's where the similarity will end.

With developers in the USA and France writing two separate strategy titles, Virgin Games still isn't quite sure about this mammoth undertaking. How would you turn a complicated novel into interactive entertainment?

"At the moment we're trying to decide what to do," verifies David Bishop at Virgin Games, "It's going to be decided when we get a playable version of both games."

News wonders quite how the massive flop "cult" movie will end up in computer form, but is keen to see the results nonetheless.

Dune should be available in spring 1992 on Amiga, PC and ST.

The Chaos Engine

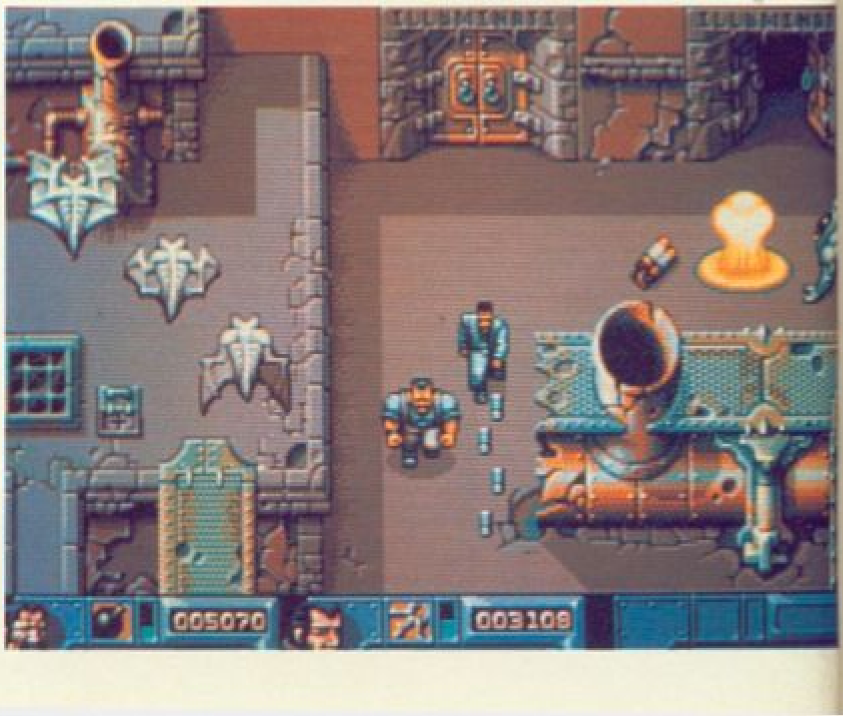
Those busy Bitmap Brothers are readying another release in the depths of London's East End. The Chaos Engine has very little to do with fractal geometry theory and instead mixes 'the finest points of computer role-playing games and classic Bitmap Brothers action'.

Players control up to three characters with individual abilities and weapons on a look-down eightway scrolling arcade adventure to destroy the dastardly Chaos Engine and a horde of creatures.

"These monsters employ intelligence and cunning using a unique form of behaviour modelling," claims a spokesperson at Renegade Software. "Additionally, the game encourages teamwork and character management"

The development group has oodles of experience with top-selling games like Speedball 2 and Gods. Eric Mathews and Phil Wilcock are designing The Chaos Engine, Steve Cargill is punching the code, graphics are the responsibility of Dan Malone with music and sound effects provided by Richard Joseph.

The Chaos Engine should be available this winter.



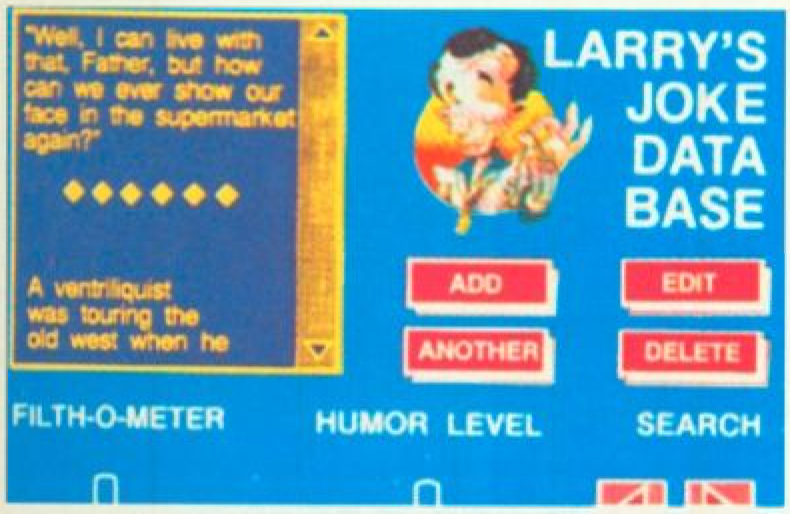
Plan 9 From Outer Space

Generally regarded as the worst film of all time, Plan 9 from Outer Space is coming to the Amiga, PC and ST early next year courtesy of Gremlin.

Enlisting the talents of a few ex-Cinemaware programmers in Ireland, Gremlin is busy converting this 1959 black and white sci-fi shocker into an action adventure. The team reckons this game-of-the-movie will be unlike anything you've played before. "We don't want to make the usual mistakes made by our competitors," confirmed Ian Richardson at Gremlin, "We're taking our time on this project and aim to get everything absolutely right."

Finding the holder of the rights to Plan 9 has proved to be a task in itself. The production of the original movie was plagued by problems and a severe shortage of cash and talent. Tragedy struck after only a few days of filming when leading actor Bela Lugosi suddenly died and the director ended his career writing pornographic novels. Will Gremlin face similar problems?

Fans of Plan 9 will be pleased to hear Gremlin will include a video featuring edited highlights of the movie. Additionally, there are rumours of a West End theatre production planned for later this year.



"Well, I can live with that, Father, but how can we ever show our face in the supermarket again?"

◆◆◆◆◆◆

A ventriloquist was touring the old west when he

Laffer Utilities

The programmers at Sierra On-Line are continually larking around so they've come up 'the ultimate in productivity software' for your office PC. Laffer Utilities is an off-beat collection of programs designed to keep boredom at bay.

"Now you can efficiently waste time at work," remarked a spokesperson, "pretending to be hard at work while you actually create lotteries, play games and read jokes."

The database of gags, supplied by ol' Leisure Suit Larry himself, can be fine-tuned by playing with the humour level and 'Filth-O-Meter'.

A built-in safeguard feature in Laffer Utilities immediately changes the screen display, just in case the boss suddenly looks over your shoulder.

Dan Dare

The Pilot of the Future and his faithful companion Digby are to star in a multi-million pound series for television, so Virgin Games is considering re-releasing their Dan Dare computer games to take advantage of this renewed interest in this seasoned comic book hero.

Zenith, the acknowledged TV production company behind Inspector Morse, is pumping huge amounts of cash into the shows which should air on ITV early next year.

Virgin Games has supposedly retained the computer game rights to Dan Dare, though a spokesman for the firm said he doubted they will do a new game to coincide with Dan's TV debut. "We might got for a special compilation package," he announced, "Dan Dare II was my personal favourite."

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NEWS TECH NEWS TECH

Who's pushing the envelope of electronic wizardry? Rik Haynes finds out...

More details have surfaced on the new CD-ROM add-on drive for Sega's Megadrive video games console. Far from being a standard system, the Mega-CD can scale and rotate sprites courtesy of a built-in 68000 microprocessor running at 12.5MHz and six megabits of buffer RAM to speed things up. Roughly thirty games are currently being developed for the Mega-CD in Japan, North America and Europe. Sega told ACE the machine will be available in the UK next year. A price is yet to be set.

Putting On The Polygons

Not wishing to be left behind in the race to create virtual realities, Japanese coin-op giant Sega is now developing spectacular polygon-pumping visual technologies. These could hold the key to a new generation of arcade gaming. According to leading Sega scientists, the humble coin-op will soon be showing sophisticated computer generated images similar to those normally seen in movies and military flight simulators.

Most sprite-based titles, typified by Sega's Out Run and G-Loc, tend to be simple driving and flying games where the programmers manipulate motion objects to create the illusion of speed.

Designers of games utilising photorealistic polygon graphics can create their own worlds for players to enter and experience. Right now, complex polygon-based games are expensive to develop and produce, but systems like Microprose's F15 Strike Eagle and Virtuality from W. Industries are showing the way.

"We're working on a very powerful system right now," claims a Sega spokesperson, "It's simply a question of improving polygon-generation

Video Painter

Not everybody needs or understands the latest font editor or sprite animation package for their computer. Video Painter from Vtech Electronics (0235 555545) is an easy to use electronic sketchpad for kids with a spare £80 in their piggy-bank!

Connected to a normal TV set and operating on batteries or a 9V AC adaptor, Video Painter provides the young artist with twelve bright colours and six different patterns to play around with. There is also an extensive library of over 50 predrawn images including vehicles, fantasy characters, people, animals and shapes for those poor unartistic souls who need a helping handful of pretty pixels.

"Added entertainment is provided by the animation mode which brings objects to life," promises a spokesperson for Vtech Electronics. "As if that were not enough, Video Painter can also connect to a VCR for picture storage with no extra attachments required."

VIDEO PAINTER

Vtech Electronics is trying to tempt three-year-old pixel picassos with the Video Painter electronic sketchpad.

Complimentary peanuts are no longer enough! Faced with flight boredom, passengers are demanding ever more forms of high-tech leisure. Systems like Skyview, a compact TV and VCR built into the armrest, puts passengers in control of their own entertainment so they can watch videos in the comfort of their seat.

Sky-High Video Games

Flying business class on Japan's All Nippon Airways certainly has its benefits, namely free video games! Passengers on long trips from London to Tokyo are treated to luxurious seats with individual TV monitors and a wider choice of stereo channels offering high-quality CD sound.

Konami, a respected Japanese software house, has created six video games for the airline including a colour conversion of the Gameboy title, Quarth, and a popular golf simulation. Little is known about the actual system except the software runs on Sony screens. Now you really can join the mile-high club!

For reservations or more information contact your travel agent or All Nippon Airways on (071 495 7667).

Rappa

Better known for toy trains, Hornby is 'on the beat' with a portable drum machine. Rappa is the size of a Walkman and consists of one large pad for the bass drum and four smaller pads providing snare, tom-tom and cymbal sounds. Each of these four touch-sensitive finger pads can be varied to produce two other percussion sounds such as an electronic snare, cowbell, clap and carnival whistle.

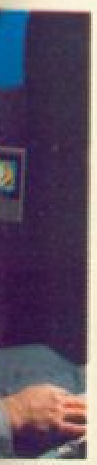
"Now you can rap to your favourite rave with the latest and most sophisticated chip technology," suggests a wired-in spokesperson for the company, "So next time you're listening to a groove, remember to strap a-Rappa to your stereo and boogie-on-down."

I can't believe they said that, either!

Rappa costs £30.

For more rap and chat write to
Hornby,
Westwood,
Margate,
Kent CT9 4JX.

Drum along to your favourite tracks with Hornby's radical



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Digital Art

Verbum, the Journal of Personal Computer Aesthetics, has launched a CD-ROM magazine which features a showcase of animation and interactive multimedia works, interactive columns and feature stories, with music and images from musicians Todd Rundgren and Graham Nash, and several recognised electronic music composers. This is the perfect way for you to experience the sub-culture of electronic art.

"Verbum Interactive allows the 'reader' to interact with the magazine in a way that has never before been possible by making sound, motion and interaction with the magazine's contents available in a free form, reader selectable way," chirps the cheerful publisher, "We're pleased to be playing a catalysing role in this exciting field of converging media."

The first two-disc Verbum Interactive edition contains over 500 megabytes of text, graphics, sound, animation, 20 minutes of music tracks, 60 minutes of audio interviews and 150 pages of printable text. It costs $50 and requires a Macintosh SE30/II with 5MB RAM, 8-bit colour monitor and CD-ROM drive.

Verbum plans to launch a regular quarterly subscription service in early 1992 with editions for Macintosh, MS-DOS, CDTV and CDi. Write to Verbum, PO Box 12564, San Diego, California, USA for further information.

Expansions

Things really get new age with the Expansions pattern generator for the Apple Macintosh. Based on geometric modules which contain crystal-like rules of growth, viewers have interactive control over the creation and modification of these modules. Thus a vast number of patterns may be quickly created, making Expansions the perfect gift for architects, clothing designers and illustrators seeking inspiration.

These strange patterns grow within a 1280 by 1280 pixel array and may even be grown inside the artwork of imported MacPaint compatible documents for crystalline chaos. Expansions is priced at $79.95 and comes with over 100 predefined pattern definition files and a 132 page illustrated manual.

Author John S Stokes III has been updating the software since 1985 and his company Pixel Pathways (0101-619-294-8686) is currently devising other forms of 21st century computer aesthetics to 'open up new creative possibilities'.

caption for pic supplied in xpress library (choose which one)
These fully grown Expansions patterns were imported into a paint program and coloured.

COMING SOON MAN!
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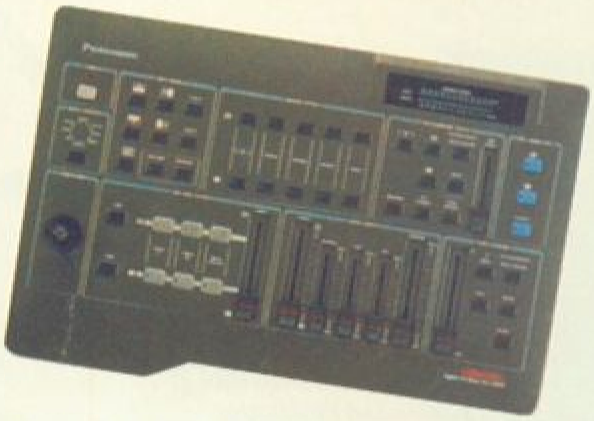


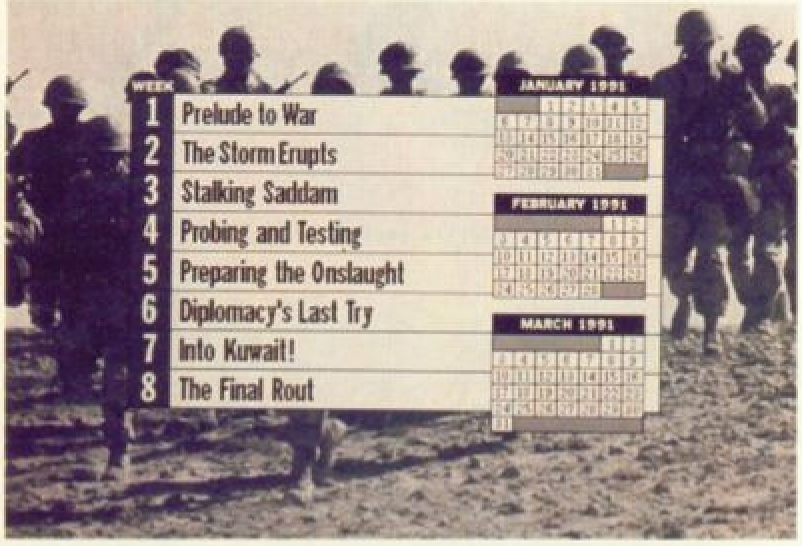
Panasoic Digital AV Mixer

If your home videos are looking a little tired, why not try Panasonic's WJ-AVE5? This Digital AV Mixer can turn out a variety of special effects like fading, stroboscoping, audio mixing and 96 wipe patterns. The Picture-in-Picture function enables you to fit an entire input image into a smaller area of a rectangular wipe pattern. Wipe scrolling direction can be selected and even reversed to provide greater interest.

Panasonic sees the device as a great advantage over existing equipment thanks to the wealth of easy to use features built into the WJ-AVE5. "It's packed with technology to provide many innovative effects," assures the company, "Video Editing has become real fun!"

Stroboscoping your wedding video is just one of the bizarre digital tricks possible with Panasonic's WJ-AVE5 Video Mixer.

The next time you buy a burger, fries and strawberry shake at Burger King in the USA you may find yourself in the midst of a Cable News Network with television monitors and satellite dishes recounting the latest news, entertainment and advertising in an endless seven-minute cycle. Rival fast food chain Pizza Hut has already run successful experiments with video jukeboxes at three outlets in Chicago. And they say it could never happen over here...


WEEK
1 Prelude to War
2 The Storm Erupts
3 Stalking Saddam
4 Probing and Testing
5 Preparing the Onslaught
6 Diplomacy's Last Try
7 Into Kuwait!
8 The Final Rout

This Desert Storm multimedia magazine is the first of many CD-ROM projects from Warner New Media.

Desert Storm On CD-ROM

Unlike any war before it, the Gulf War encouraged the use of startling information and communication technologies. News reporting via satellite link-up came of age during the conflict and now Time Magazine has pioneered a new form of publishing with Desert Storm: First The Draft of History.

This multimedia magazine on CD-ROM is a joint venture between Time Magazine and Warner New Media giving you a week-by-week look at the Gulf Crisis via an 'extraordinary volume of war-related stories, reports, photographs and maps'.

Information junkies will be slobbering over their Macintosh because the forty-dollar disc contains more than 6,000 screens of information, including exclusive audio reports and other unique material previously unavailable to the general public.

"Eventually, electronic journalism should find itself sold on newsstands," says Warner New Media's president Stan Cornyn, "The next step would be transmitting it to home recorders via cable."

Developing a good multimedia product requires a lot more painstaking planning than say a book, play or film. After the idea is struck upon, an interactive designer decides how the product will work, what the interface will look like and, crucially, how the user will navigate through the disc without getting totally lost in a mass of multimedia.

Warner New Media is currently working on a number of projects with other divisions of publishing giant Time Warner such as Time/Life Books, Sports Illustrated, Time Magazine and DC Comics.

"Multimedia has become a revolution just as The Talkies and Technicolour revolutionised Hollywood," proclaims a spokesperson, "By developing new forms of information-rich entertainment from mixes of graphics, music, interactivity, animation, computer control, narration and video, Warner New Media is defining future home entertainment."

Stereo Replay

Is the Stereo Replay the first stereo sound sampler for the Atari ST range of computers? Microdeal certainly thinks so.

"This completely new hardware cartridge contains dual analogue-to-digital and digital-to-analogue convertors to ensure the ultimate in 8-bit sample quality," and there's more, "The twin phono outputs provide the user of a standard ST with high quality stereo output."

Stereo Replay costs £90 and comes with a Stereo Editor program which allows you to manipulate mono and stereo samples in 8-, 12- and 16-bit rates. With the Stereo Beat software you can load up to 15 different samples into memory and then play three-channel sounds out from the stereo ports of the cartridge at the same time. Groove is in the house, yet again! Microdeal can be contacted on (0726 68020).

Rapman

Groove is in the house thanks to Casio's RAP-1 mini keyboard which aims to tap the current popularity of Rap and House music among the yoof of today. "The freshest keyboard ever is one to make your massive green with envy," say the hip dudes at Casio.

Now trainee keyboard jockeys can create their very own meltdown mixes via the built-in 'Scratch' disc, mini microphone, three drum pads and thirty auto rhythms reflecting the latest dance styles.

Special sound effects are produced by Rapman's Voice Effecter function which enables rappers to modulate their voices approximately one octave higher or lower than normal.

Rapman RAP-1 costs around £70 and is available from your local Casio dealer.

Younger fans of Vanilla Ice and MC Hammer should like Casio's £70 Rapman keyboard with its built-in 'Scratch' disc and rap beats.

GAME SOUNDTRACKS

Get ready to throw out your Chesney Hawks CD singles because there's a new form of music on the scene.

Newcomer Digital Dreams has remixed famous Amiga game soundtracks into a series of compact disc collections for eight quid a go. Each CD features approximately 45 minutes worth of music from leading software companies. K-Tel and Teledisc eat your hearts out!

"This idea will inject extra enthusiasm and excitement into the computer market," believes Simon Palmer at Digital Dreams, "Who knows, maybe in a few months time we'll see people getting down to one of these tunes on Top of the Pops."

More compilations are on their way, including sounds from video games on the Megadrive and PC. So if you're after a DAT 48KHz remix of Impossamole, Switchblade 2, Awesome and Shadow of the Beast, talk to Digital Dreams on (0602 754991) and tell them ACE sent you.

WING COMMANDER II

"Wing Commander really is like playing a movie, it just blows the competition away" PC Leisure

"This is a definite candidate for Game of the Year, Wing Commander is one of the most exciting games ever released" Ace

Last year, ORIGIN defined the state of the art in computer games . . .
Now, we're doing it all over again.

Good evening, Captain.
Mission debriefing, 0400 hours.

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MINDSCAPE

Letters

ANYONE FOR FOOTBALL?

I just thought I'd write and tell you about our Computer Football compo we are running in the Merseyside (mainly Liverpool) area. We will be staging a compo to win a Sega Megadrive sometime in December. The compo will be staged sometime in Liverpool and we are looking for people to enter.

The compo will use Kick Off and Kick Off 2 for its knock-out round and use STs only (they are a lot faster!!). If you could mention us, we would be grateful.

We only ask that the competitors bring their own joystick and the entrance fee is five pounds.

Merseyside Computer Football Association
(M.C.F.A.)
28 Watergate Lane
Woolton
Liverpool
L25 8QJ
Tel: 051-428-2280

Well, how about it? If anybody reckons themselves a bit and would like to try their luck, give it a go. We're not too sure about your claims of the ST version being faster, though.

AND ANOTHER THING!

I'm sorry to tell you that my letter is yet another one that is going to complain about one machine, in defence of another.

I am referring to the Sega Megadrive, Atari Lynx, Super Famicom and all that rubbish - these consoles are filling up your magazine like nobody's business, and what do we get? Terrible screenshots of someone kicking hell out of someone else, badly written reviews about the same old games, games that might have looked good about eight years ago, but now, in their millionth re-incarnation, are looking slightly less attractive to say the least.

I'm not saying you should completely cut consoles out of your otherwise excellent mag (although it would be nice...), just tone it down a bit - balance the reviews a bit more. If ACE stands for Advanced Computer Entertainment, why are you supporting machines like the GameBoy and GameGear? They may be portable, but speaking from experience, I can say that the majority of games on the GameBoy (Tetris excluded) are completely unplayable - the graphics are tiny and blurred, the sound is awful, no doubt the GameGear is the same.

It seems that the only real way forward for games lies in the hands of the PC, and maybe the Amiga. While the Megadrive may deliver impressive aesthetics (though nowhere near as good as a VGA PC with a sound board), it is quite obviously limited only to shoot'em-up games. Although various manufacturers will try to tell you otherwise, consoles are no good for playing decent, long-lasting games on, such as Sierra adventures, or Ultima type games - platform shoot'em-ups are not long-lasting games, no matter how good they are.

I know there are many people out there who will disagree with me totally, but there are also people who will agree with me - most of my friends prefer proper computer games to consoles. I know a good PC will cost you nearly five times as much as a Megadrive, but prices will come down very soon, and it will be a matter of comparing the Megadrive's lower price to the superior features of the PC.

Piero Serra
Northampton

So ACE has terrible screenshots and badly written reviews, but the magazine is excellent? Sorry, but those two statements would seem to be mutually exclusive. That means that can't both be true, Mr Serra. Just what is the problem with console games anyway? The fact that you're having a go at the Sega GameGear without even having seen it working is a bit rash, don't you think? And the GameBoy, unplayable? What about games like *Choplifter, Super MarioLand, Hunt For Red October, Tennis, Qix* and many others too numerous to mention?

Isn't it funny how people always believe that the way forward for computers is with the machine they happen to own? Now we ourselves have high hopes for the PC, but when you start on about how much better it is than the MegaDrive even though by your own admission a decent model costs five times the pricethe comparison seems a little useless.

You mention that while people (such as me) disagree with you, many people will also agree with you. Well, let's see how many people leap to your defence over the next couple of months.

OUTRAGE!

ACE - you are my only hope! I've suffered in silence for so long now that I'm on the brink of doing something psychotic.

What is making me so mmmmmad? What has got my goat? What, at the moment, is sitting so squarely on my wick and sticking right slap bang in the middle of my craw?

Shopkeepers.

Now don't get me wrong. I've had plenty of experience of perfectly decent shopkeepers who inhabit our shores, but I seem to find the "standard" (what a joke!) of service provided in the computer shops in the UK.

At first I thought it was just me. I lived in London until recently and sort of expected the rude, discourteous and unhelpful service provided in Centra London.

But I've recently moved into a far quieter part of the world (I'll refrain from saying exactly where, in order to spare the embarrasment of store owners in the area) and I couldn't believe my misfortune.

For a start the shops seem to be staffed entirely by either pre-pubescent boys with only the slightest knowledge of forthcoming releases or stupid old men who seem to think that just because I'm female I don't have the slightest idea about anything one of these people actually tried to convince me that a Sega Megadrive was simply a Master System for the American market, and it was a bit of a waste of money. What a co-incidence that they only had Master systems in stock.

I've also had cause to complain a number of times about faulty disks. Now, I'm fully aware that many software companies provide replacements, but I'm also aware that it is the owner of the shop's responsibility to provide goods of a saleable quality. I don't take kindly being told that my son (who doesn't exist, unless I'm very much mistaken) has "Probably already made a copy of it and just wants a new game."

In a word I'm disgusted. If you purchase a dress or a clock or a record, a portion of the outlay, it's nice to believe, is intended to ensure a decent treatment by the people who are taking your money.

Mavis Nicholson
Address witheld by request

IN THE RED CORNER...

It's happening again, isn't it? It started with "my Speccy's better than your Commodore". (I should know as I owned both at one time or another). Time passed. 8-bit owners upgraded to more powerful 16-bit computers. And then it began again - "My Amiga's better than your ST". Which wasn't strictly true for several years because Amiga games used to be straight port-overs of ST games and were released a couple of months after the Atari version. This kept me happy because by then I had upgraded to an Atari ST.

But now the ST is in decline - all of my local computer shops have stopped stocking STs and their software because of nearly non-existent support from Atari and the recent boom in Amiga sales.

As an ST owner I can see the limitations of my machine now that companies like Psygnosis are exploiting the Amiga to the full.

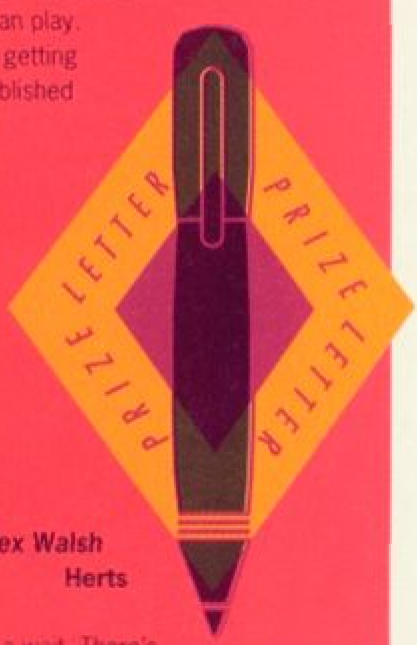
I can see the age-old argument against progressing further now that consoles are again resurging with new-found popularity. How long is it, I wonder, until your letters page is full of "My Famicom is better than your Megadrive" letters?

At the moment I own a Megadrive (I managed to flog my ST to some unsuspecting fool) and I intend to buy a Famicom as well when it's officially released over here. At present the Megadrive retails at £150 so Nintendo will have to undercut this price if they want to ensure that people "not in the know" will choose their product over the Megadrive. I have read in the computer press that it will be about £100 - the price of 3 or 4 Megadrive games. I won't buy a Famicom to replace my Megadrive, just to widen the range of games I can play.

I also noticed that in a reply to a letter a couple of month's back you said that several magazine publishers were getting together to try and stop the coverdisk problem. Well since I bought that issue I noticed TWO weekly magazines published by Future have joined the bandwagon. Wasn't Future one of the companies that agreed to help stop the coverdisk spiral? In your August issue (page 70) there is an advert for "The One For Amiga Games" announcing TWO free games! Can you explain this or are you just a bunch of hyprocrites?

By the way, I notice you've dropped the PC Engine in favour of the GameBoy and the GameGear. Since the GameGear is basically a portably Master System and the GameBoy is monochrome, I don't really think these count as "Advanced Computer Entertainment". You can't con me into believing that it's all due to the small user base of the PC Engine users in this country because the Famicom's got an even smaller user base here at present but still gets its own Direct Line section in the Pink Pages. Toshiyuki Kawahita probably knows all the Famicom owners personally!

Apart from that your mag isn't half bad (by this I mean it knocks the hell out of the tabloidy approach used by C+VG).



Alex Walsh
Herts

If you're not planning to by a Super FamiCom until it's officially released in this country, you could be in for a bit of a wait. There's still no official UK launch date, and it may not be until well into 1992, and possibly even later. You wouldn't be badly advised to invest in an import model - it may set you back a few bob, but at least you won't have to wait until Judgement Day to play Super MarioWorld - and you'll get a nice looking machine, and not the redesigned US model. That's one ugly muther.

The reason we don't cover the Engine any more is twofold - for a start, we simply don't see software for it any more, so there's not really anything for us to cover, and also because the Engine is never going to be released officially in the UK - unlike the Famicom, which is a new and interesting machine, and will definitely be launched over here at some point. Fair enough?

As for the coverdisk controversy - The One For Amiga Games did in fact comply to the full-game ban, which didn't come into force until August 1st. All magazines published before that date (which included the two-game Amiga One) were perfectly alright. Future, however, got a bit carried away and a couple of its titles went one game over the limit. But rest assured, now that the new regulations have had time to take effect, you'll not be seeing any more commercial full-price games appearing on magazine coverdisks. So that's alright.

This isn't the only letter we've had from ACE readers who are disgruntled about the poor standard of customer service in computer shops. What is most horrifying is that the problem doesn't seem to be isolated to just a few cowboys - even the supposedly reputable shops are apparently doing a lot less less than they could to ensure that their customers get a square deal. There is an organisation called NASCR (the National Association of Specialist Computer Retailers) which is supposed to keep a watchful eye on this sort of thing, but things obviously aren't working out if this kind of shoddy service is still the best punters can expect.

Have you been on the sharp end of a foul-mouthed and acne-ridden pencil-necked shop assistant? Or bought a game only to find that there was no disk inside and been told when you took it back "well son, that's the chance you take"? Or maybe you've been the victim of actual physical abuse by a retailer or shop assistant. We're keeping a dosier of complaints here at ACE, so if you think there's something we should be told about, write and let us know.

A SOUND QUESTION

I have just purchased a PC, and not being impressed with the built-in speaker, I am looking for a sound board. There seem to be four on offer: the Roland, AdLib, Soundblaster and SoundMaker II. Could you tell me what difference there is between them and which one is compatible with the most games.

It seems a shame that computer manufacturers have concentrated on providing excellent graphics and improving performance, and have neglected the sound. Every computer manufacturer I went to offered a whole range of processors, hard disk drives and monitors, but not one even mentioned anything about their computers' sound capabilities. Not everyone does word processing or the company accounts all day - not even the accountants! Game sound effects seem to be at the bottom of list of most software houses as well.

I, and I'm sure many others would welcome the day when sound wasn't just added as a token effort. After all, sound could make or break many games.

James Westcott
Woking
Surrey

It's all quite simple, really. Roland delivers that is generally considered the highest quality sound with its MT-32 and LAPC-1 boards. They're effectively fully-blown MIDI systems, so you can generate professional-quality music with the right software and apparatus, as well as play games. But be warned - they're VERY expensive. The AdLib is slightly lower in sound quality, but is substantially cheaper. Finally, the Sound Blaster, which produces sound roughly equivalent to the AdLib in quality, is the cheapest and is rapidly growing in popularity. As far as compatibility concerned, you'll find that the vast majority of software, particularly the US stuff, supports all three formats. So it's just a matter of personal choice and how much cash you're willing to lay out, really. Crank it to the max!

IT'S SONIC, GUY!

A few words about Sonic the Hedgehog. Firstly, in your review of the game you called the bad guy Dr Eggman when he is actually called Dr Robotnik, and the sixth level is actually called Scrap Brain Zone and not Clockwork.

Also, there is a time limit of ten minutes which may be a problem to those exploring a new act but is plenty of time once you know what you're doing.

Apart from that I agree totally with the review and it is an excellent game.

As I haven't played on the Famicom I realise I may be talking c**p here but from the screenshots I think that the Sonic graphics are better than Super Mario 4. The backgrounds especially look for superior in terms of detail and imagination. There is, however, one criticism. I, being a fantastic gamesplayer, completed Sonic after two weeks of obtaining the game (smug grin) and have seen the end-game sequence. This isn't the masterpiece I was expecting. I don't want to spoil it for others to say what it is, but with a game as good as Sonic I would have thought that Sega could have done much better. This seems to be the case with a lot of games, computer and console, these days. Do you in your infinite wisdom agree with this?

Well, that's it for now. Keep up the great mag and please send me £2000 for writing such a brill letter.

Adrian Hopson
Broxbourne
Herts

Hmmmm... we're not sure we agree with you about the Sonic/Mario graphics. While Sonic is indeed more detailed, we reckon that Mario beats it hands down in terms of imagination - it's one of those things where you really have to see the game in order to understand. Remember, graphics aren't just about giving a game a flashy face - really good graphics actually work with the gameplay and serve to provide the whole thing with an appropriate atmosphere. MarioWorld does that more effectively than any other game we've seen.

So there. And you're right about the Sonic end sequence. Gamesplayers who lash out good money for a game and then spend weeks completing it are entitled to a decent reward when they finally complete the game. We don't like to rub it in, but you really ought to see MarioWorld - now there's a game with a REAL end sequence.

IN THE WORKS - LIVE!

YOUR CHANCE TO MEET BULLFROG AND SEE THE AWESOME POPULOUS II IN DEVELOPMENT BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES!

Other magazines may offer you second best when it comes to showing you up-and-coming games in development, but here at ACE we believe that only the best is good enough for you. Before now, the closest you've come to seeing a game being put together is seeing words and pictures on a page. Next month, however, you could be lucky enough to see a game in development before your very eyes AND meet the people behind the magic when we take In The Works into a new dimension. Six people will get the chance to visit the offices of esteemed development team Bullfrog Productions (creators of Populous, Flood and PowerMonger) as they put together their most eagerly-awaited title yet - Populous II!

Not only will you meet the Bullfrog team and see first-hand via live demonstrations how Populous II is being put together, you'll actually get a chance to put forward your own ideas for the game! It may sound too good to be true, but you'll be designated special playtesters for the day, and after experiencing the game, in progress and in action, the Bullfrog boys will open their ears to listen to YOUR comments and suggestions. If any of your suggestions go down well, the idea will not only be implemented in the finished game, but you will receive a credit in the manual as a member of the game's design team! How's about that then? A special report on the day will appear in the next issue of ACE.

If you'd like to take part in this once in a lifetime experience, you'll have to apply fast as only six places are available. To get in on the action, write (DON'T PHONE) to us at ACE, not forgetting to include these vital details:

Your name, address, daytime telephone number and age (must be 15 or over).
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Tell us if you've ever played the original Populous before.

Send your entries (postcards or back-of-sealed-envelopes only) to IN THE WORKS LIVE!, ACE, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Remember, there are only six places, so if you want to be in with a chance, so get that application in the post NOW!

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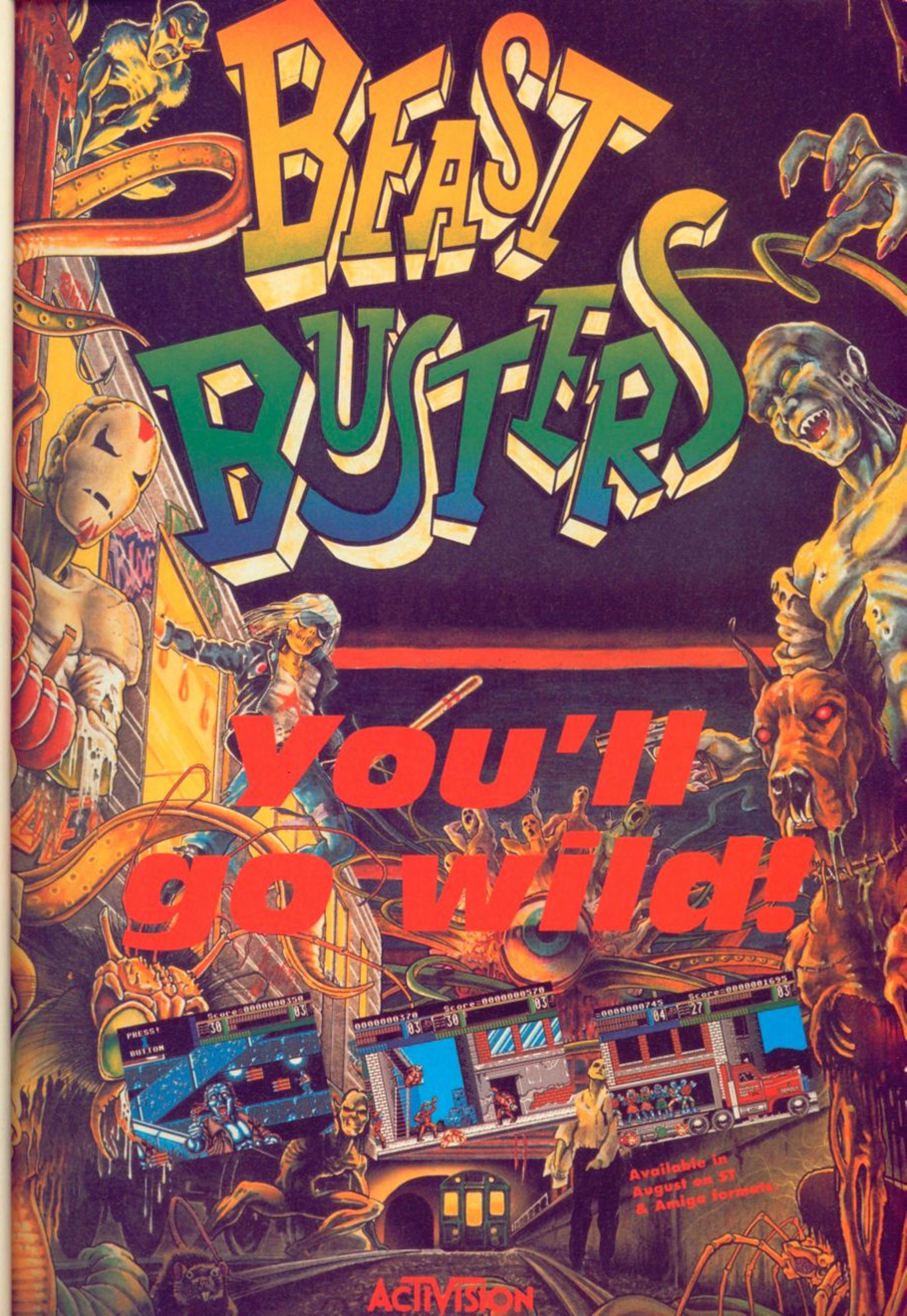
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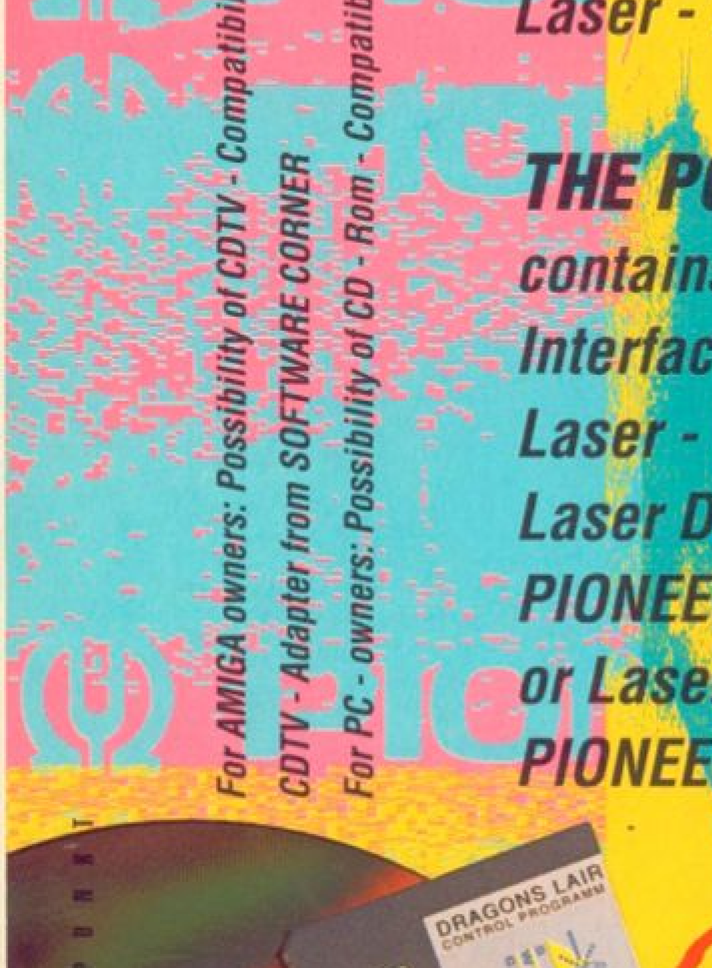

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PLANET OF THE

In a major exclusive, ACE reports on shock discoveries by the Hubble Space Telescope

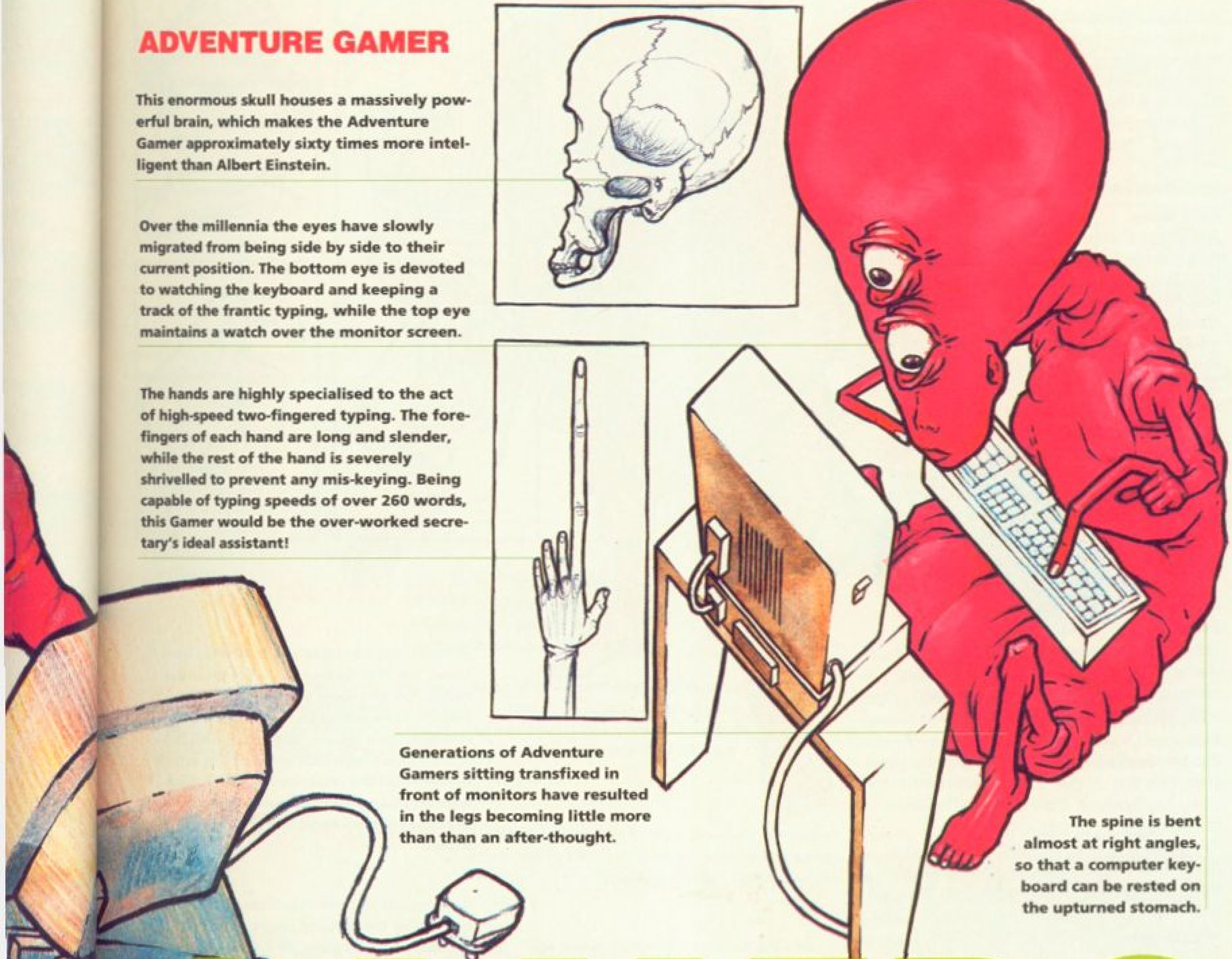
There were great hopes for the Hubble Space Telescope when it was launched last year. In orbit high above the Earth and beyond the obscuring effects of our planet's atmosphere, scientists predicted that the Telescope would radically change our view of Space, and that astronomers would be able to see interstellar objects in more detail and clarity than ever before.

However, nobody was expecting the Telescope's most recent discovery. Last month, fine tuning of the Telescope's lensing system revealed a planet orbiting Alpha Centaurii, the Sun's closest stellar neighbour. The planet, named Alpha Centaurii Gamma or ACe-Gamma, bears many similarities to Earth. Geologists believe that the planet's many continents were once part of a single land mass, but owing to volcanic activity and shelf-plate drift they have become separated by vast seas.

But this was just the start. Using advanced image-enhancement software the astronomers achieved even greater photographic resolution, and then they made their greatest discovery yet: aliens. Each of the planet's continents is populated by a species of being, each very different from the inhabitants of the neighbouring continents yet still strangely similar.

Further study revealed something very peculiar: the ACe-Gammas (or just Gamers as they came to be known) are obsessed with computer games, and spend nearly all of their waking hours playing them. Rather than enjoying a variety of games, each species on each continent plays just one type. So while the beings on one continent may play platform games, those on the neighbouring continent play flight sims.

ADVENTURE GAMER



This enormous skull houses a massively powerful brain, which makes the Adventure Gamer approximately sixty times more intelligent than Albert Einstein.

Over the millennia the eyes have slowly migrated from being side by side to their current position. The bottom eye is devoted to watching the keyboard and keeping a track of the frantic typing, while the top eye maintains a watch over the monitor screen.

The hands are highly specialised to the act of high-speed two-fingered typing. The forefingers of each hand are long and slender, while the rest of the hand is severely shrivelled to prevent any mis-keying. Being capable of typing speeds of over 260 words, this Gamer would be the over-worked secretary's ideal assistant!

Generations of Adventure Gamers sitting transfixed in front of monitors have resulted in the legs becoming little more than than an after-thought.

The spine is bent almost at right angles, so that a computer keyboard can be rested on the upturned stomach.

GAMERS

Although their computer gaming technology is on par with Earth's, they are completely primitive in every other technological sphere. They have no cars, boats or 'planes, so there is no contact between the continents. One alien did invent a wheel, but used it to create a floppy disc rather than a revolution in transport.

Xenologists believe that the different species have all evolved from just one man-like creature that existed at the time the continents were joined. Fans of one game type congregated together, and when the land mass split apart, the game-playing groups separated too. Over the eons the Gamers have radically evolved to suit themselves best to the games they enjoy, resulting in the bizarre mutations observed.

In this exclusive report, ACE reveals the secrets of four of the strange creatures on the Planet of the Gamers...

ADVENTURE GAMER

Field Notes

This hermet-like creature leads an unbelievably ponderous and slow-moving life. Its sole purpose is to play text adventures, an activity facilitated by the highly-evolved brain, eyes and hands. All non-cerebral activity is kept to a minimum, resulting in severely under-developed arms and legs, and primitive internal organs.

Feeding

Due to its tiny mouth and its under-evolved digestive tract, the Adventure Gamer's food has to pulped down into a liquid paste. The process goes something like this:

You enter the kitchen. You see: some green vegetables and a red blender.

TAKE GREEN VEGETABLES

You take the green vegetables.

EXAMINE RED BLENDER

This is a device for pulping food. There is a slot on top where food can be entered and a small on/off button.

PUT GREEN VEGETABLES IN RED BLENDER

The green vegetables are inside the red blender.

PRESS BUTTON

Which button?

PRESS SMALL BUTTON

The vegetables spin round and turn into a consumable paste.

SUCK PASTE

I don't understand 'SUCK'.

EAT PASTE

You eat the nutritious paste.

Mating

Reproduction is something that only happens once in an Adventure Gamer's life, and then only if it's very lucky. Should two Adventure Gamers of the opposite sex happen to stumble across each other, then they perform a sexual act known as 'A Meeting Of Minds' - the Gamers press their foreheads together and pass Solutions.

RPG GAMER

Field Notes

This is perhaps the loneliest and saddest of all the creatures on ACe-Gamma. During a game the RPG Gamer has the strange ability to alter its body shape and assume the form of the character it's currently playing. Even more astounding, this cloning is mental as well as physical. Thus if an RPG Gamer is playing an old wizard, it will grow a pointy hat, a beard and talk words of wisdom in an arcane language. (A bit like Steve)

However, between games the RPG Gamer has little character of its own. Its flabby, dough-like body looks like that of every other RPG Gamer, with no distinguishing features. The babyish face and vacant expression convey no sense of any intelligence behind its dull eyes. The creature can only ever be said to be truly alive when playing a game.

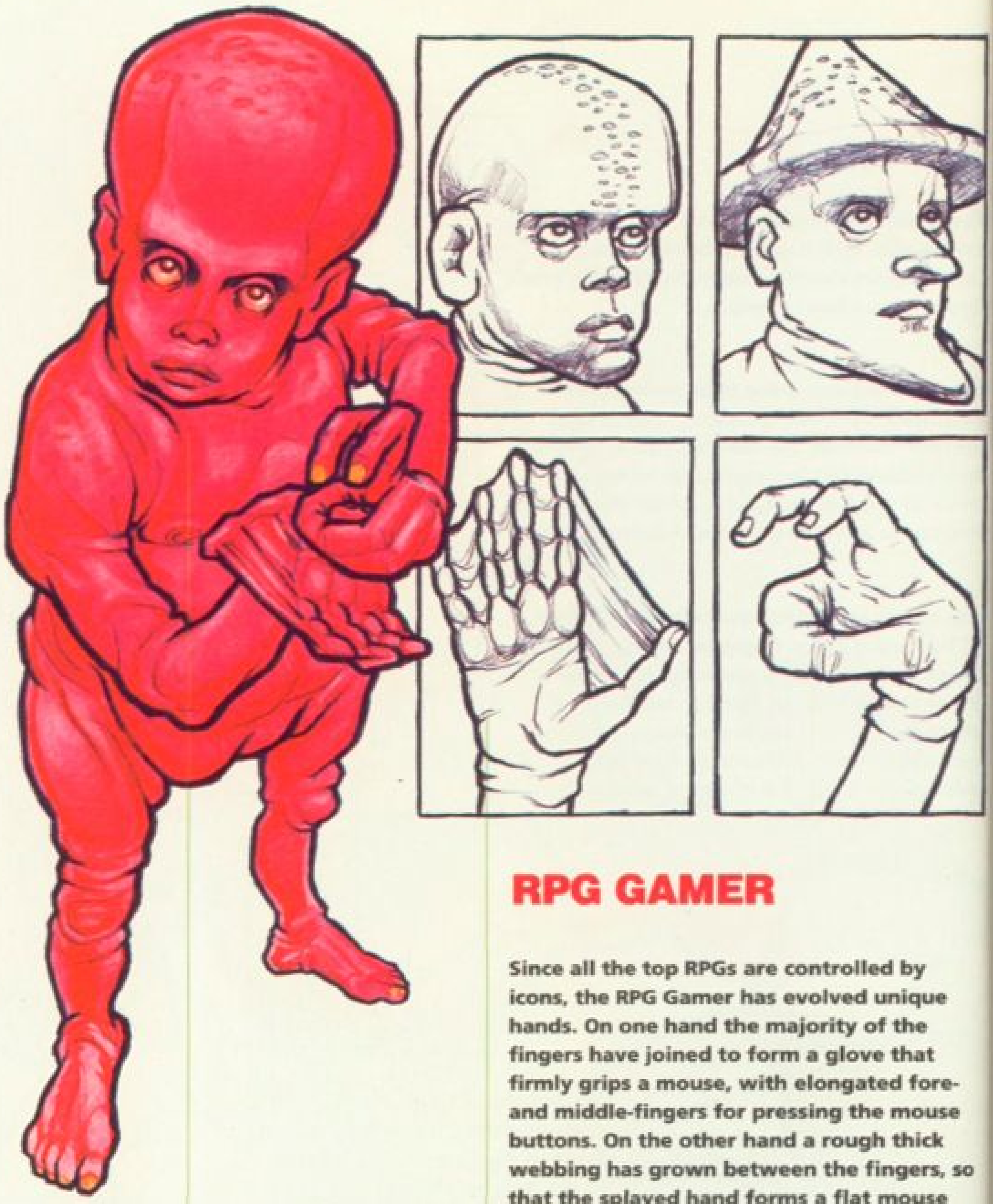
Feeding

The RPG Gamer will eat whatever food it finds. Having strong preferences or dislikes imply some form of character, and as noted above, when not playing this creature has none.

Mating

It's very rare for two RPG Gamers to meet, and even when they do they usually ignore each other. It is fortunate, then, that the RPG Gamer has the ability to reproduce asexually.

Fertilisation is down purely to luck. Should a Gamer form a male character immediately after being a female one (or vice versa) then there is a small chance of conception during the brief transition period. The Gamer grows larger and flabbier, until enough body matter is developed for a second fully-grown Gamer to 'bud off'.



RPG GAMER

Since all the top RPGs are controlled by icons, the RPG Gamer has evolved unique hands. On one hand the majority of the fingers have joined to form a glove that firmly grips a mouse, with elongated fore- and middle-fingers for pressing the mouse buttons. On the other hand a rough thick webbing has grown between the fingers, so that the splayed hand forms a flat mouse mate.

Xenologists believe this Gamer closely resembles the ancient creature that all Gamers evolved from. RPG Gamers all look very similar, with rather bland if paunchy features.

SHOOT-'EM-UP GAMER

Field Notes

This Gamer is renowned for its incredible swings in mood. During a game it is cool, calm and completely collected, but on defeat the creature becomes an inconsolable ball of rage, lashing out at the monitor and screaming abuse at the screen. This is all due to the bizarre nature of its adrenal glands.

These oversized organs generate huge amounts of adrenalin during play, which is temporarily stored in sacs growing from the thing's back. Between games these adrenalin reserves have to be depleted, which can only be done in the outbursts described above. As you might guess, the Shoot-'Em-Up Gamer has a tragically short lifetime due to rapid burn out.

The Platform Gamer (not shown) shares many of the physiological features of the Shoot-'Em-Up Gamer, but its adrenal glands are far less productive, making it a more placid if slightly jumpy creature.

Feeding

The Shoot-'Em-Up Gamer is a voracious slob-like eater. In between games it feeds on junk food so that it can get eating over with as quickly as possible and return to another game. Particularly keen on plant tips and flame-grilled scraps.

Mating

Following a lengthy gaming session the Gamer's adrenalin levels occasionally reach intolerably high levels, which can only be reduced by passionate acts of reproduction.

To find a mate, the Shoot-'Em-Up Gamer can alter the pigmentation of the skin across its back, much like a chameleon changes skin colour. The creature uses this ability to display its current hi-score. The higher the score, the more attractive the creature becomes to a possible mate.

The reproductive act itself cannot really be dealt with in-depth in a youth magazine such as ACE. Suffice to say it involves lowering shields, using a joystick and bizarre power-ups.

FLIGHT-SIM GAMER

Field Notes

Strangely, for creatures that have never developed any form of powered flight, flight sims are very popular, with this species of Gamer being one of the largest in number.

The Flight-Sim Gamer combines many of the physiological features of both the Adventure and Shoot-'Em-Up Gamers. It's most unique features are the bone and cartilage growths from the head and neck, which resemble a World War One flying helmet and scarf. These appear to serve no purpose other than making it easier for the Gamer to 'get into' its pilot's roll. Some scientists believe these may act as an attractive feature to possible mates.

Feeding

With playing sessions taking several days, it's difficult for the Flight-Sim Gamer to find time out for a proper meal. Thus a huge 'In-Game Fueling' service industry has built up around them. Giant food tankers pull alongside the concentrating Gamer, and drop a food shoot down to the creature's mouth. The Gamer then sucks up a light nutrient soup.

Mating

Sorry, but again we can't reveal too much here. Scientists believe the creature's reproductive act shares many similarities with that of humans, beginning with the male lowering its undercarriage and... Well, you can guess the rest.

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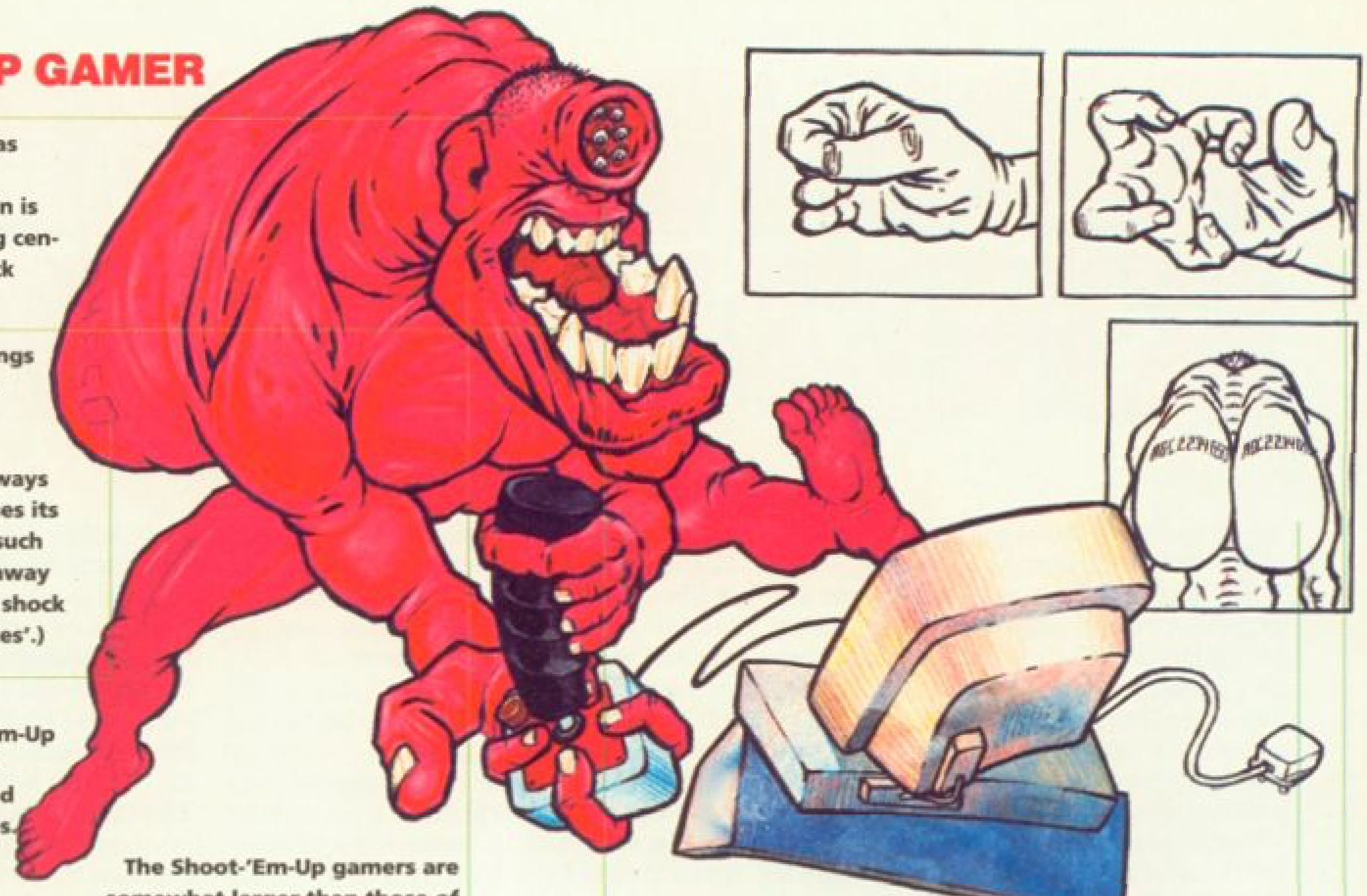
SHOOT-'EM-UP GAMER

The Shoot-'Em-Up Gamer has little time for intellectual thought. The shrunken brain is little more than a switching centre for all the eye-to-joystick nerve impulses.

An oversized mouth and lungs and toughened vocal cords have evolved due to the excessive shouting and screaming of abuse that always occurs when this Gamer loses its last life. Its vocal power is such that creatures up to 26km away have been seen to flinch in shock at the noise. (See 'Field notes'.)

By altering its skin pigmentation, the Shoot-'Em-Up Gamer is able to display its latest hi-score, which is used as a means to attract mates. (See 'Mating'.)



The Shoot-'Em-Up gamers are somewhat larger than those of its ancestors; all the better for hearing those stereo sound FX.

This Gamer has many eyes, each allocated to watching a certain part of the monitor screen. No incoming missile or alien goes unmissed by its razor-sharp vision. The eye socket has grown to form a raised boney ridge that prevents any outside distractions affecting play.

These large swollen sacs are used to store the huge amounts of adrenalin produced during play, which is discharged between games by such acts as raucous shouting and screaming, kicking of the monitor screen and occasionally frantic mating. (See 'Field notes' and 'Mating'.)

Again, the creature's arms are rather shrivelled, but the hands have undergone incredible amounts of adaption.

The fingers of one hand have spread out almost a right angles to form a strong locking grip on the base of a joystick. The thumb of the same hand is large and muscular, and can rapidly pummel a fire button.

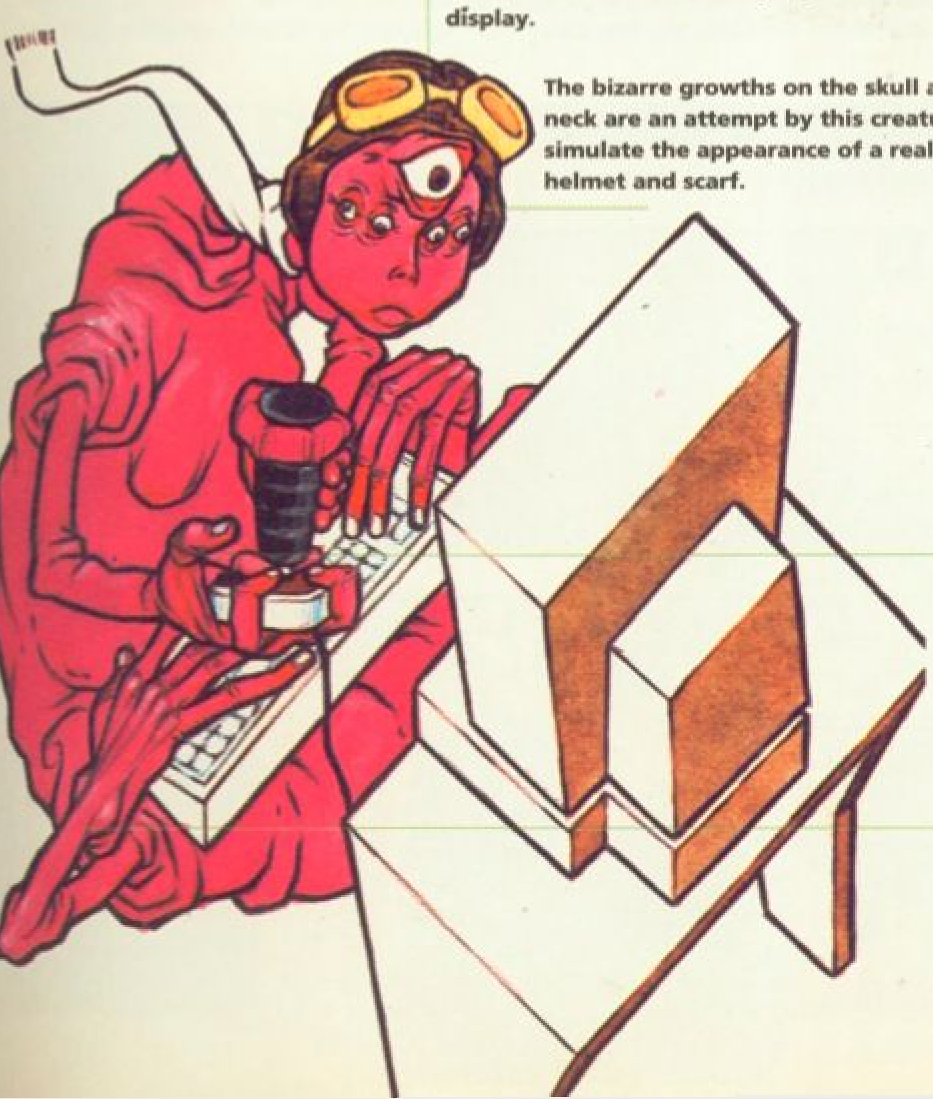
The thumb and forefinger of the other hand have become joined at the tip to form a variable-diameter sphincter that permits a vice-like hold on the shaft of the joystick. The other fingers are shrunken and useless.

Neither hand has any sweat glands, so there is no chance of the stick slipping in the

FLIGHT-SIM GAMER

The large eye is used to scan the main on-screen action, while the four smaller ones below keep a track of all the dials and gauges in the cockpit display.

The bizarre growths on the skull and neck are an attempt by this creature to simulate the appearance of a real flying helmet and scarf.



The arms and hands share many of the Shoot-'Em-Up Gamer's features. However, since flight sims usually use proportional joysticks, the Flight-Sim Gamer has evolved very precise and subtle control over the stick, as opposed to the Shoot-'Em-Up Gamers violent jerks.

The withered legs are bent up so that the feet are raised above the keyboard. The toes of the feet have grown to become like fingers, and these are used to press the myriad keyboard controls typical of flight sims.

ARE YOU BRI
KNOWLEDGA

You may have seen some allegedly tough, tricky or perhaps even "rock hard" quizzes. But this, dear reader, is the toughest. A veritable Magnusson of games questions. A plethora of puzzlers. Those with anything but a complete knowledge of their chosen subject need not apply. Whatever your ability, however, you should at very least find enough quandries presented to keep you arguing in the pub/bus/canteen for many an hour.

There is, of course, a software prize for the first reader who gets all the questions correct and mails their answers to ACE Quiz, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, so please remember to specify which machine you own.

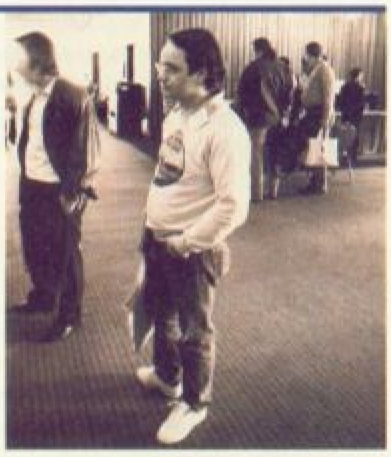
GENERAL GAMING QUESTIONS

1) What is the name of Mario's brother?
2) What car is featured in *Turbo OutRun*?
3) How many islands are there in *Rainbow Islands*?
4) What was the follow-up to *Sim City* called?
5) What game by LucasFilm has the shortest title?
6) Which has the longest?
7) How many batteries does a GameBoy need?
8) What does CDTV stand for?
9) Name the chap who co-wrote *Elite* with David Braben.
10) How many bits are there in an Acorn Archimedes?
11) What classic Golf game was written by the Carver brothers?
12) Which German programmer converted *Star Wars* and Hard Drivin forDomark?
13) How many *Back To The Future* games have appeared on 16-bit?
14) Which Clive Barker movie was adapted twice by Ocean?
15) What color hair do *Lemmings* have?
16) Who programmed 3D *Ant Attack*?
17) Who is programming *Sim Ant*?
18) What game from Cinemaware featured lots of ants?
19) What was the follow up to *Dun Darach* called?
20) Which software house produced *Super Pipeline?*
21) What was the name of the roller-skating game from F.T.L?
22) Which UK software house specialised in graphic adventures like *Espionage Island* and *Urban Upstart*?
23) V Name the star of Andrew Braybrook's Da Out game.
24) Name the first arcade adventure to have over 100 locations.
25) Who used to edit Micronet's Computer and Video Games Adventure Helpline?
26) Name Bubble Bus' biggest hit.
27) Name the author of *Adventureland.*
28) What was the name of the game that Geoff Brown, now head of US Gold programmed?
29) Name the hero of Fantasy Games' *Pyramid* and *Doomsday Castle.*
30) Name the author of *Android 2, Cyclone* and *TLL.*
31) Name Gremlin's *Zaxxon* clone.
32) Name the flop game with the extra-memory expansion pack for the Spectrum which effectively ended Mikro-Gen's games production business.
33) Who wrote *Castle Adventure* and *Planet of Doom* on the BBC for Acornsoft?
34) What did Acornsoft call their *Missile Command* clone?
35) And their *Defender* clone?
36) And their *Panic* clone?
37) And their *Scramble* clone?

LOOKS FAMILIAR?

Here are ten people selected, with no particular common thread except they have all played an important part in the industry. Can you name them?

A



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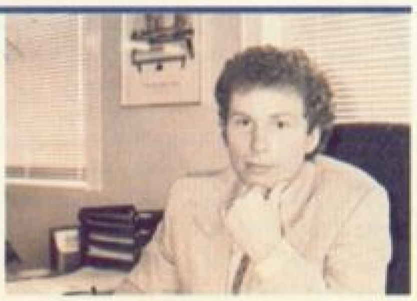

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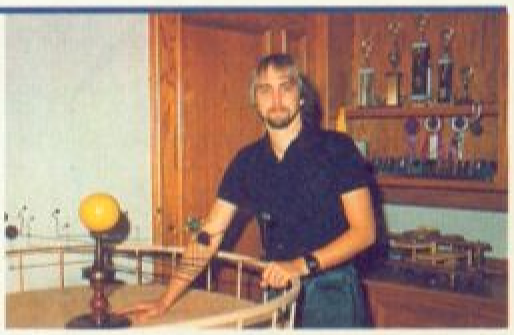

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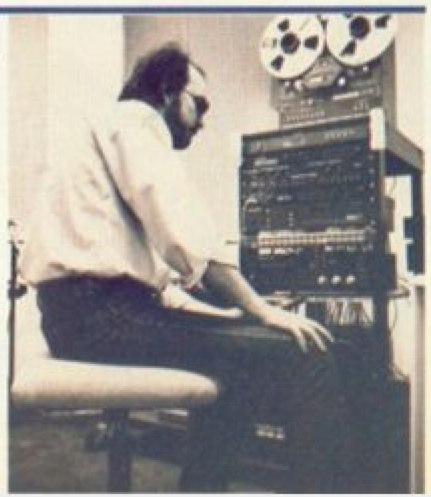

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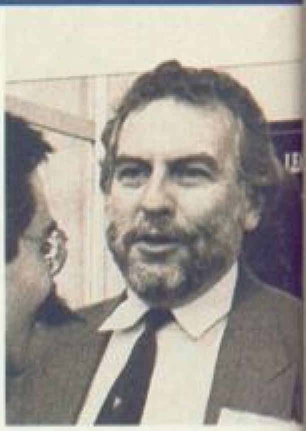

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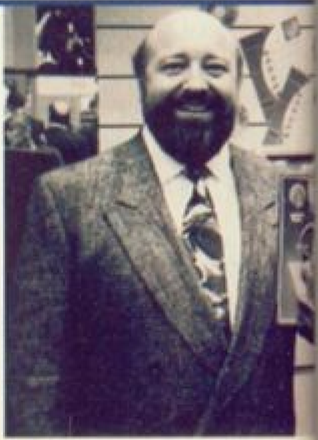

RI TAIN'S MOST A BLE GAMER?

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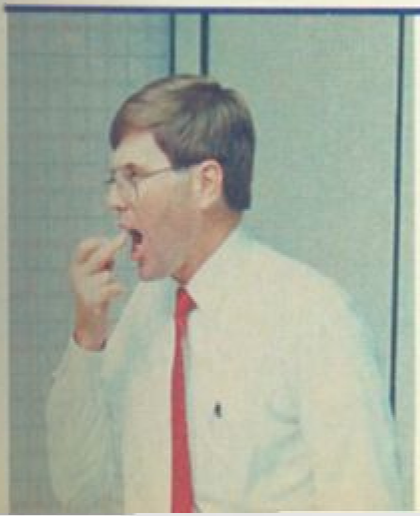
38) Name the coin-op to first use a trackball control method.
39) What was the first ever four-player arcade game?
40) What colour were the two ducks in *Dynamite Dux*?
41) Name the two *Ikari Warriors*.
42) What was the name of the bad guy in *Tir Na Nog*?
43) What was the first ever LucasFilm Game?
44) What was the first ever game to have a black hero?
45) Name four Bond games, in order of appearance.
46) Name the land-based follow-up to *Carrier Command*.
47) What was Archer Maclean's first game?
48) What colour is Tony Crowther's hair?
49) Name the game he wrote about a recepticle for tea.
50) Who does 80's C64 music maestro Rob Hubbard now work for?
51) Name the drum synthesiser that Bullfrog produced.
52) Name two Spurs players who have endorsed computer games.
53) Who programmed *Ghostbusters, Pitfall* and *Little Computer People*?
54) Bob Dinnerman wrote which classic Amiga flight sim?
55) Who published the Bitmap Brothers' first game?
56) What was it called?
57) Who designed *Kick Off*?
58) Which portly Grandslam character said "You can't park here!"?
59) How many *The Hunt For Red October* games have their been?
60) Who was supposed to be doing a *Nightmare On Elm Street* game, but never did?
61) What Infogrames game saw you trying to rescue hostages?
62) What did FOFT stand for?
63) What does FAST stand for?
64) Who wrote the original *Gunship*?
65) What is the name of the only game Jeff Minter wrote for Hewson?
66) What is the name of the company which has risen out of Hewson's ashes?
67) Name Matthew Smith's last game, which was never released.
68) Which game's title was incorrectly translated over a faxlink, leading to a hysterical historical name mix up?
69) How many lines of invaders first appear on the screen in *Space Invaders*?
70) What's the new game from Michael *"Powerdrome"* Powell called?
71) Name the game that *Thing on a Spring* music maestro Rob Hubbard programmed before turning his hand to tunesmithing.
72) Who was Whispering Horace?
73) How many Beam Software titles starred their own Horace?
74) How many games has Tony Crowther had on the market?
75) Odd one out and why? *Cutiepoo, Dynamic Debugger, Reach for the Moon, Psyclapse, International 3D Tennis* and *Bandersnatch*.
76) Name the unifying factor between: *Bombuzal, Fernadez Must Die* and a *View to a Kill*.
77) What width is the Motorola 68030 data bus?
78) Who programmed the coin op *Gyrus*, and what do they call themselves these days?
79) What was *Continental Circus* supposed to be called?
80) Name the follow up to *Sweeny Toddler*.

G

ACE KNOWLEDGE

1) *What two Arnie films have been featured on ACE covers?*
2) *What is the lowest ACE rating ever given, and what was the game?*
3) *What was the game to receive it?*
4) *Who edited ACE before Jim Douglas?*
5) *Who used to write ACE's Page 11?*



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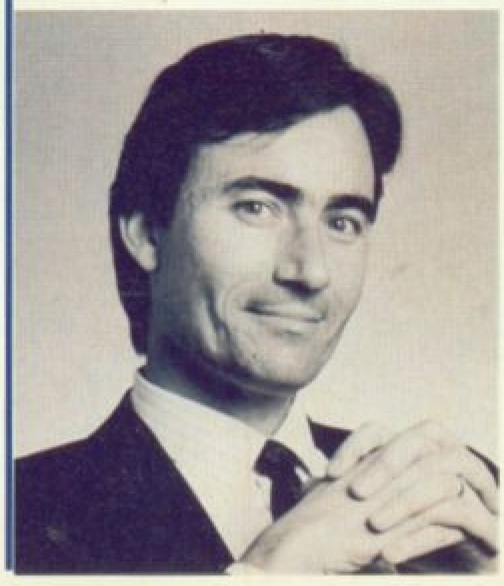

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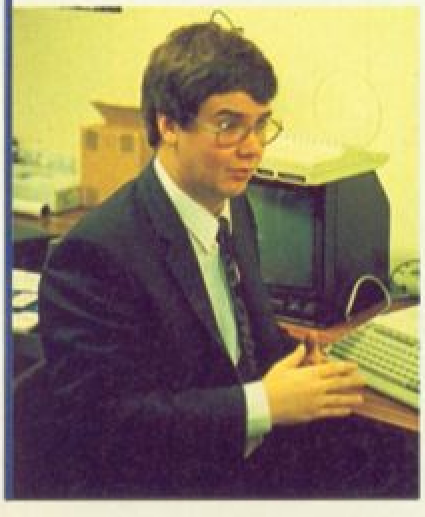
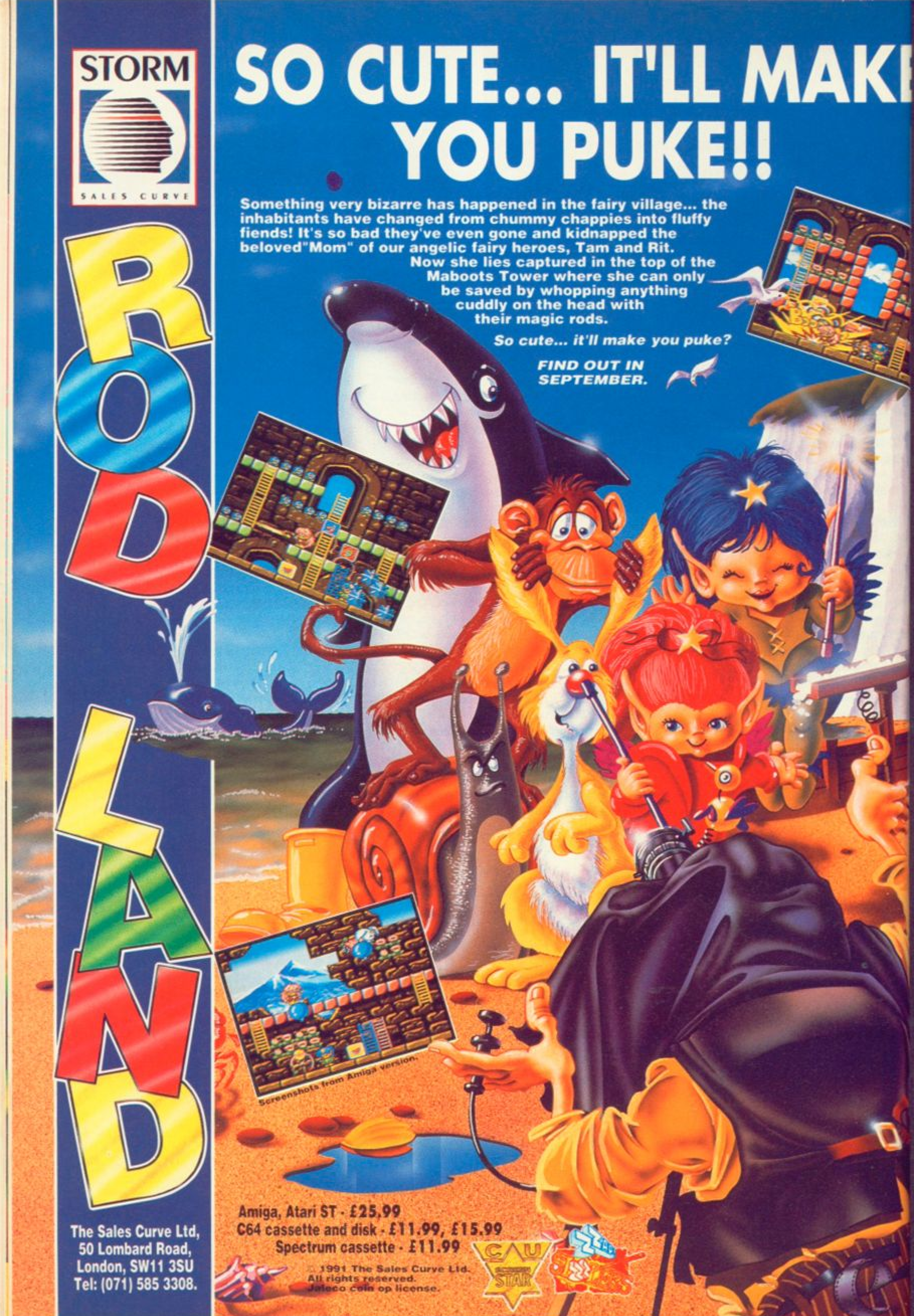


SO CUTE... IT'LL MAKE YOU PUKE!!


STORM
SALES CURVE
ROD LAND
Screenshots from Amiga version.
CU SCREEN STAR
ZZAP! SIZZLER

Something very bizarre has happened in the fairy village... the inhabitants have changed from chummy chappies into fluffy fiends! It's so bad they've even gone and kidnapped the beloved"Mom" of our angelic fairy heroes, Tam and Rit. Now she lies captured in the top of the Maboots Tower where she can only be saved by whopping anything cuddly on the head with their magic rods.

So cute... it'll make you puke?

FIND OUT IN SEPTEMBER.

Amiga, Atari ST - £25.99
C64 cassette and disk - £11.99, £15.99
Spectrum cassette - £11.99

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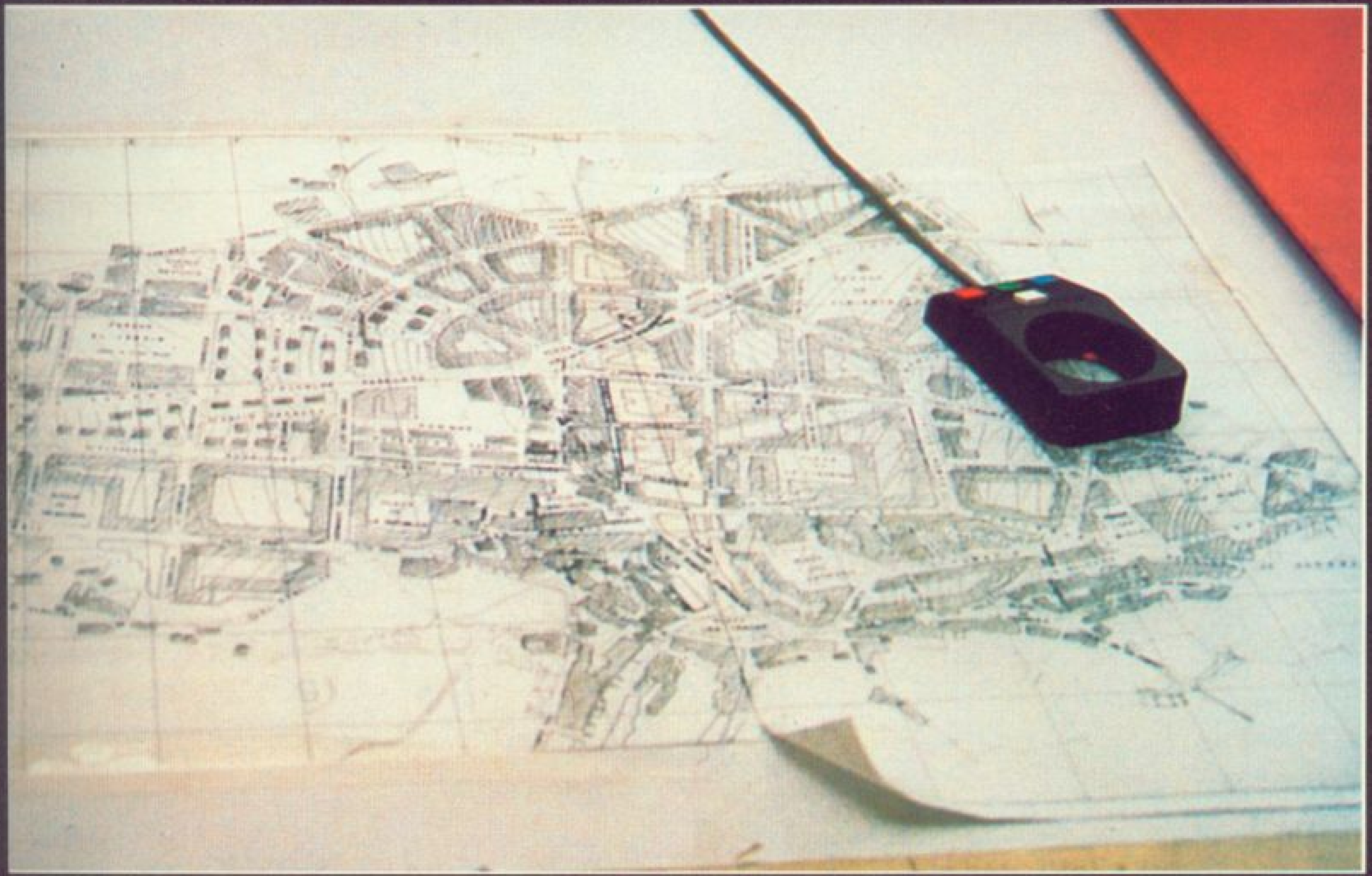


Accurate modelling is vital. Using city plans, the animator can enter the co-ordinates of the various buildings straight into the modelling software by simply pointing and clicking with the mouse-like cursor. It's a time-consuming and somewhat tedious job - just right for the trainees!

PICTURES PALACE

ACE visits Digital Pictures and discover the tricks of the computer graphics trade.

Believe it or not, there's a picturesque little Spanish town nestling in the heart of London. No really, there is... after a fashion. It's the creation of Digital Pictures, the commercial computer graphics company responsible for the virtual Barcelona featured last month. ACE visited their West London headquarters to find out how they produce these stunning animations.

OUT IN THE COUNTRY

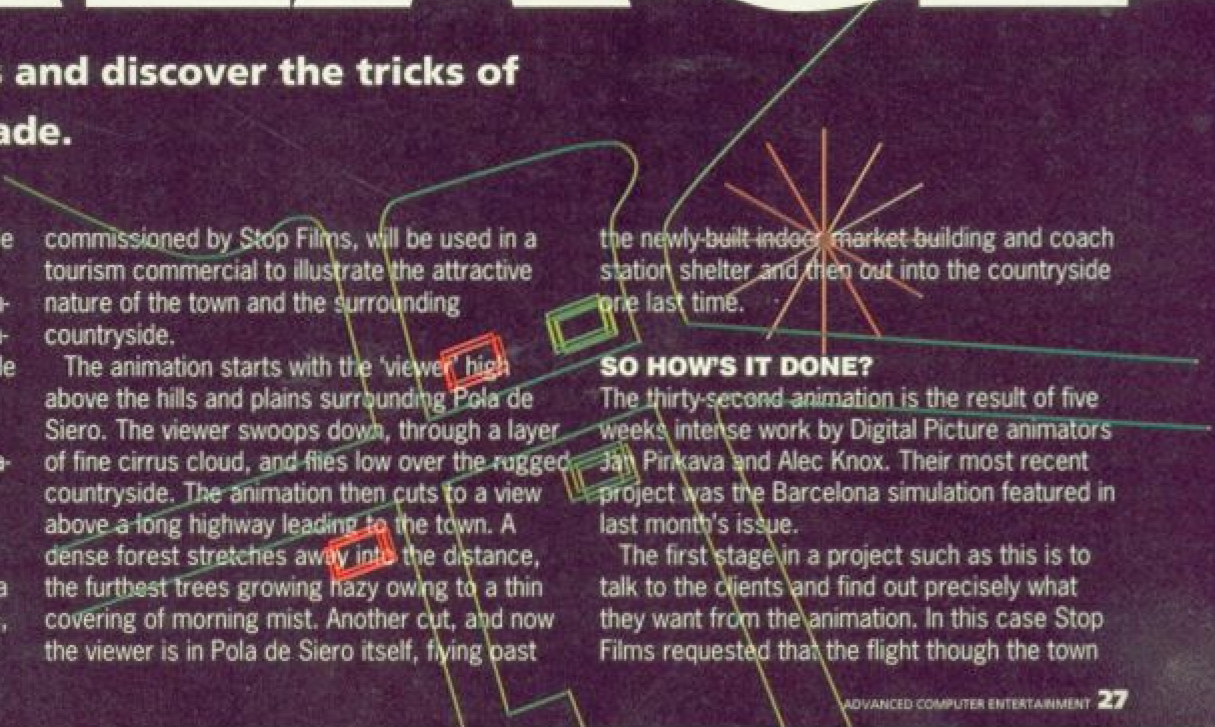
One of Digital Pictures most recent projects is a computer-generated flight around Pola de Siero, a small town in northern Spain. The animation, commissioned by Stop Films, will be used in a tourism commercial to illustrate the attractive nature of the town and the surrounding countryside.

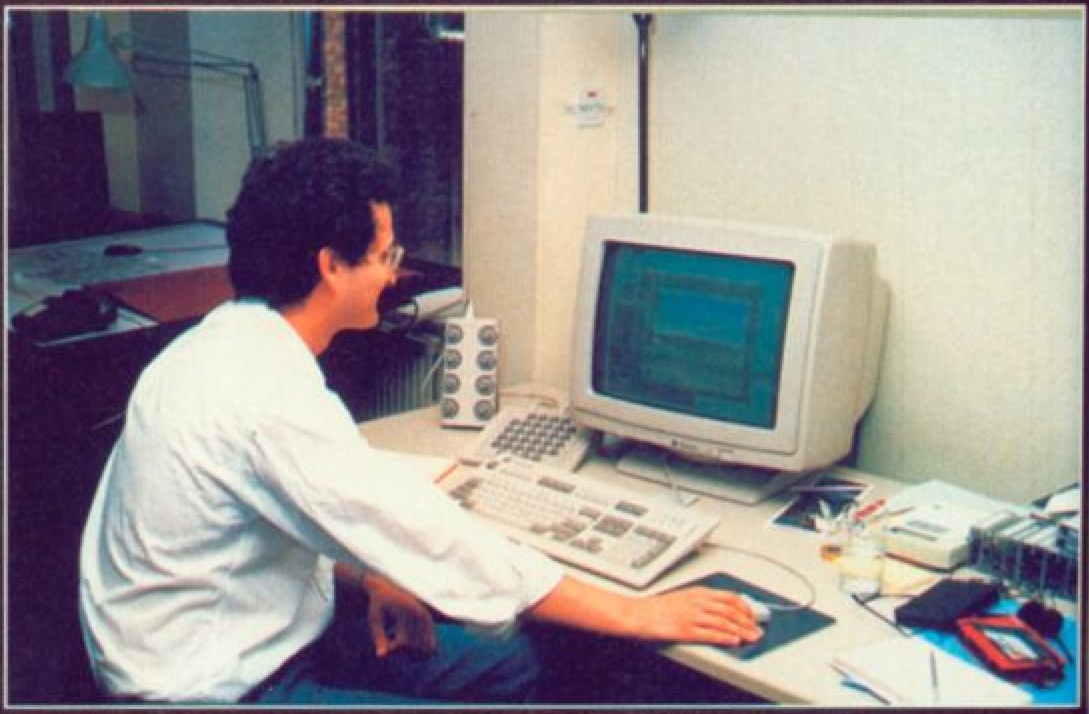
The animation starts with the 'viewer' high above the hills and plains surrounding Pola de Siero. The viewer swoops down, through a layer of fine cirrus cloud, and flies low over the rugged countryside. The animation then cuts to a view above a long highway leading to the town. A dense forest stretches away into the distance, the furthest trees growing hazy owing to a thin covering of morning mist. Another cut, and now the viewer is in Pola de Siero itself, flying past the newly-built indoor market building and coach station shelter and then out into the countryside one last time.

SO HOW'S IT DONE?

The thirty-second animation is the result of five weeks intense work by Digital Picture animators Jan Pinkava and Alec Knox. Their most recent project was the Barcelona simulation featured in last month's issue.

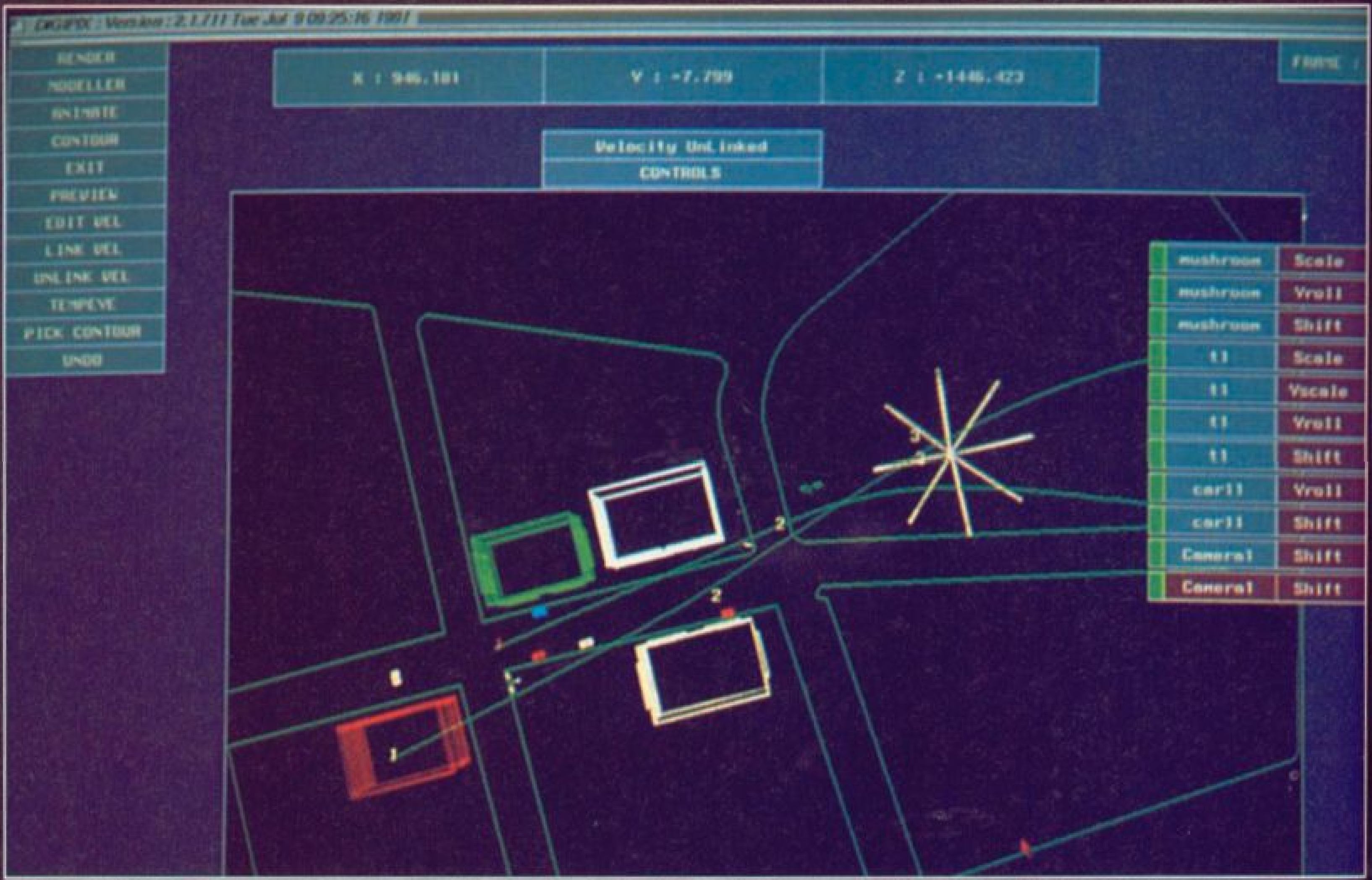
The first stage in a project such as this is to talk to the clients and find out precisely what they want from the animation. In this case Stop Films requested that the flight though the town





(Right) Animator Jan Pinkava examines a rendered scene on his Silicon Graphics 4D20 workstation. Jan has a variety of control devices at his disposal. As you'd expect there's the traditional mouse and keyboard, but note those banks of dials, each of which can be software customised to control various aspects of the current application (i.e. three dials can be set to adjust the X, Y and Z axes of a scene).

(Below) The software allows the city to be viewed from just about any angle. Jan inputs the camera's flightpath around the buildings by just setting a few key points along its route. The program then uses a process called 'splining' to calculate a smooth path between these points. Jan can watch the current flightpath in wireframe and make any adjustments necessary.


DIGIPIX : Version : 2.1.7/11 Tue Jul 9 09:25:16 1991
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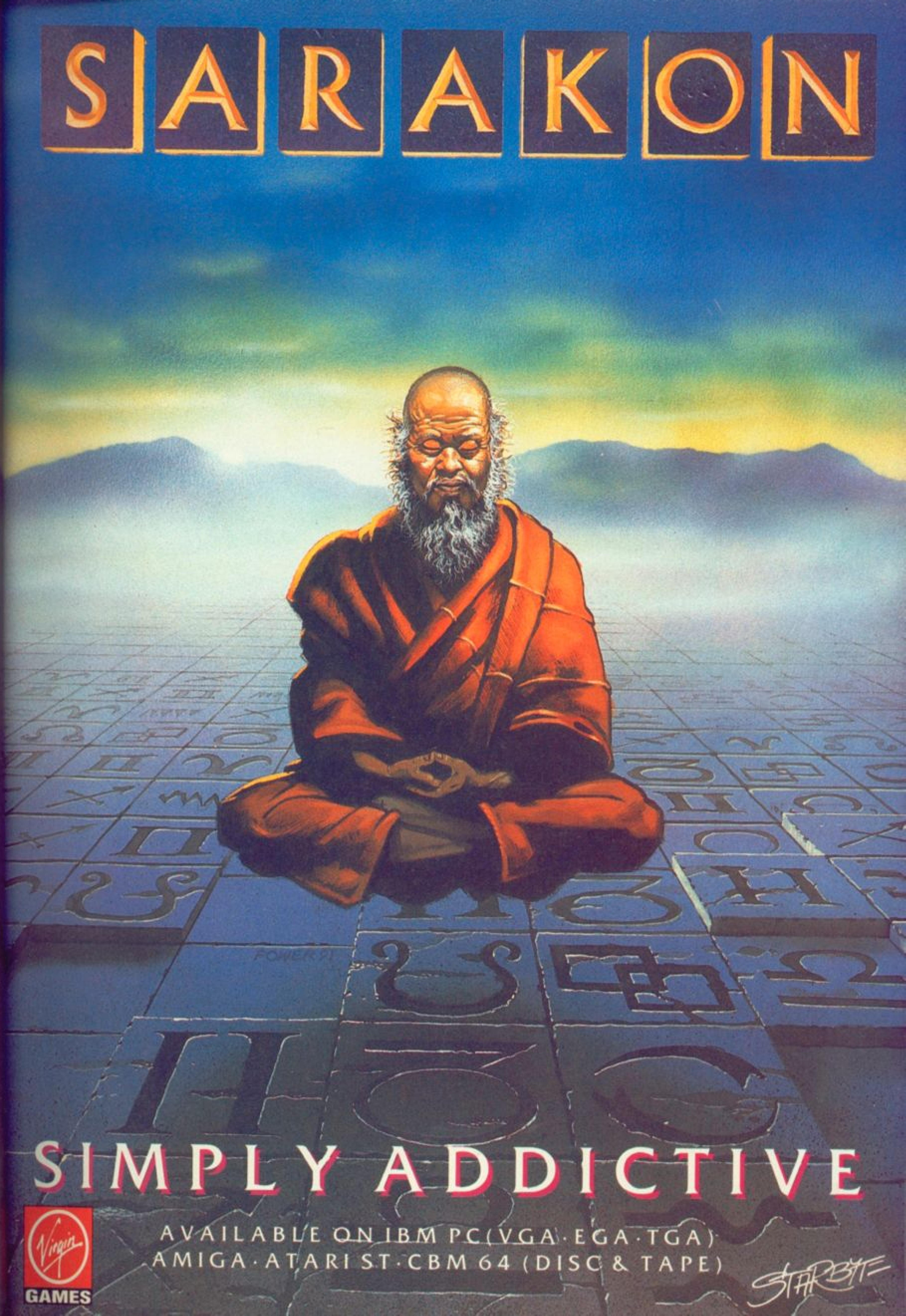
allow the viewer to clearly see the newly-built indoor market and the strange-looking coach station.

Next comes the task of collecting sufficient data on the town and its buildings to accurately model it. This data can take the form of city plans, architectural lay-outs and occasionally modelling data already on disc (although the latter is unfortunately a rare occurrence). Reference photographs are also taken so that the colouring and texturing of the final images matches reality as closely as possible.

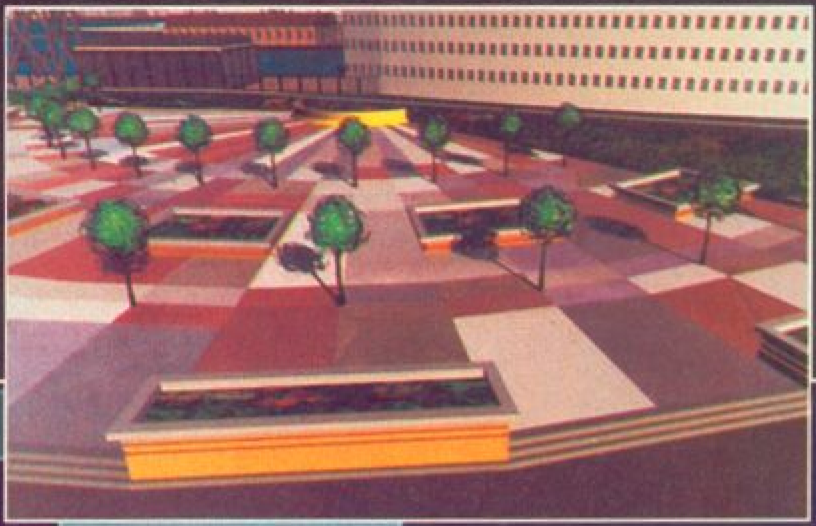
Then all this information has to be fed into Digital Picture's custom-written DigiPix software running on Silicon Graphics 4D20 workstations. As you'd guess, this can be a long and fairly tedious process - just right for the office juniors!

The animators then start planning how the animation will look, plotting camera flightpaths through the city and testing them. This is carried out using the ancient-looking wireframe 3D - the 4D20s, powerful though they are, can't generate the complex objects in solid 3D AND animate them in real time. Which is, of course, pretty vital if the animator is going to be able to do his job properly.

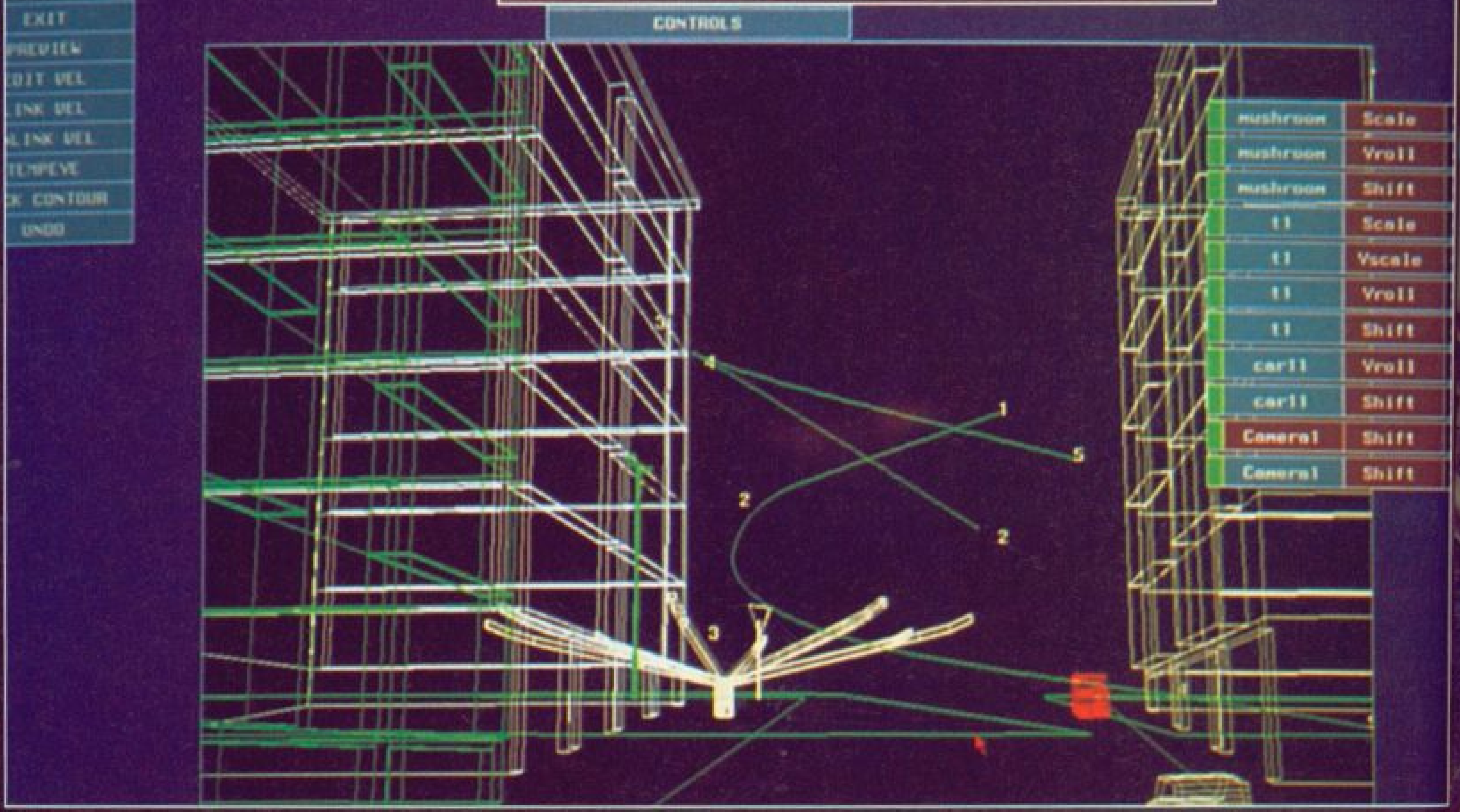
Once the animators (and the clients) are satisfied with the look of the wireframe stations. fairly e juniors! the tpaths s carried 3D - the generate imate pretty vital his job re


SARAKON
SIMPLY ADDICTIVE
AVAILABLE ON IBM PC (VGA · EGA · TGA)
AMIGA · ATARI ST · CBM 64 (DISC & TAPE)
Virgin GAMES
STARBYTE
POWER 91

animation, it's time for the acid test: rendering, where the animation code is turned into fully-detailed TV quality images. The time it takes to render each frame of animation (and remember, you need at least twenty frames per second for smooth animation) depends on the complexity of the scene. Each object has a wealth of data related to it, detailing such things as its surface texturing and reflectivity. A rendering time of thirty minutes per frame is typical.



(Below) With all the data input into the DigiPix software, city building can begin. Initially the city is generated in wireframe 3D (similar to the graphics seen in old arcade games like Star Wars and Tempest). Although not particularly pretty, these primitive images can be manipulated in real time.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(Left) This suite of VCRs is used for editing the rendered images and completing the final film.

AND THAT'S IT?

Yep, that's it. All done. It's a beautiful piece of work, and the 'naturalness' of some of the scenes is breathtaking. It's just a pity that the majority of us will never see it. But if you're on holiday in Benidorm and you happen to catch the commercial, remember: what you're seeing is not real.

Or is it...?

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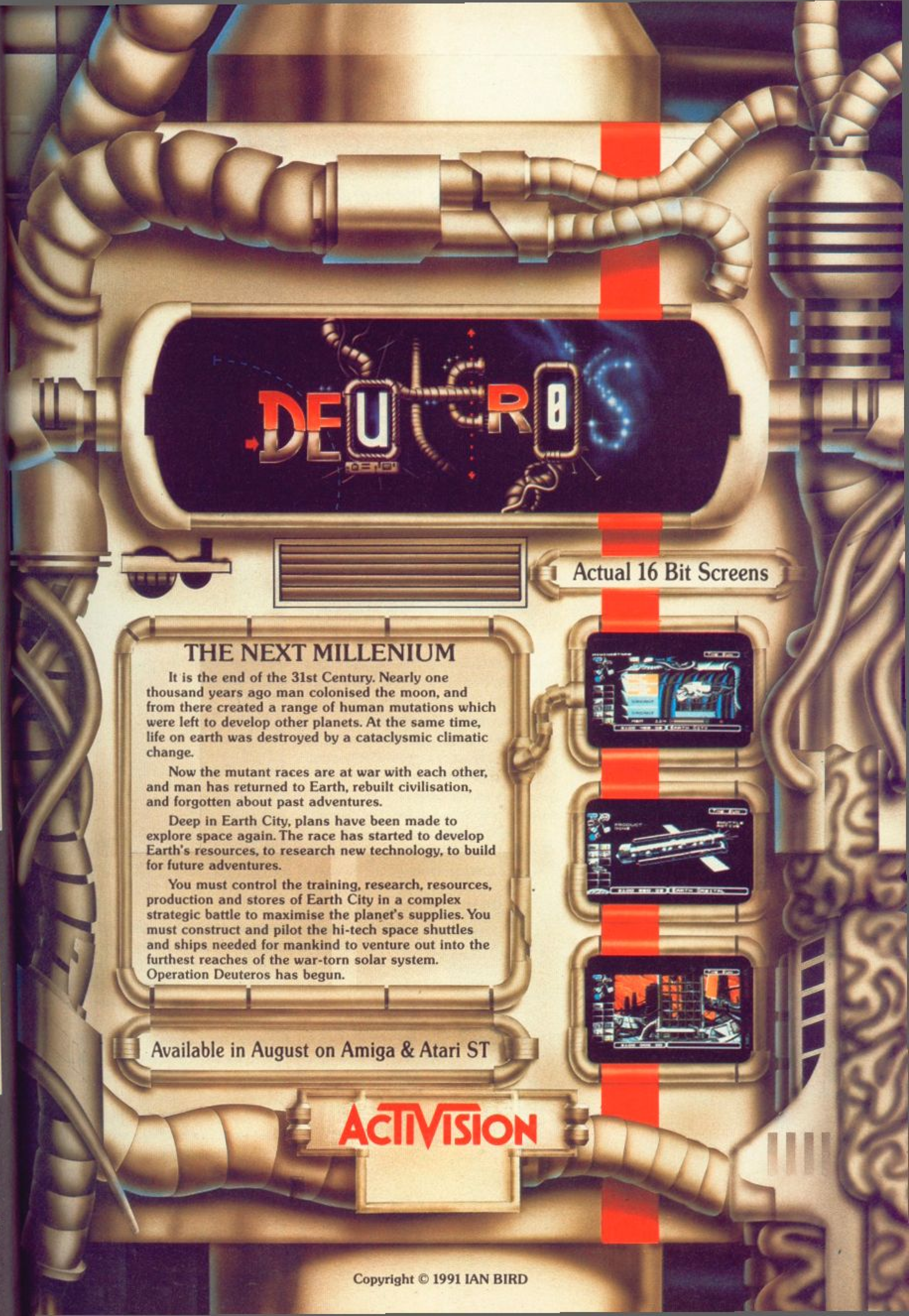

Actual 16 Bit Screens

THE NEXT MILLENIUM

It is the end of the 31st Century. Nearly one thousand years ago man colonised the moon, and from there created a range of human mutations which were left to develop other planets. At the same time, life on earth was destroyed by a cataclysmic climatic change.

Now the mutant races are at war with each other, and man has returned to Earth, rebuilt civilisation, and forgotten about past adventures.

Deep in Earth City, plans have been made to explore space again. The race has started to develop Earth's resources, to research new technology, to build for future adventures.

You must control the training, research, resources, production and stores of Earth City in a complex strategic battle to maximise the planet's supplies. You must construct and pilot the hi-tech space shuttles and ships needed for mankind to venture out into the furthest reaches of the war-torn solar system. Operation Deuteros has begun.

Available in August on Amiga & Atari ST

ACTIVISION

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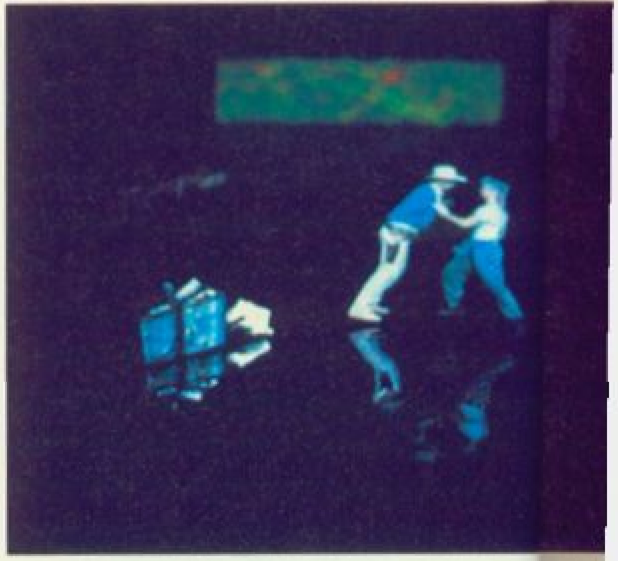
3D FLOATERS!

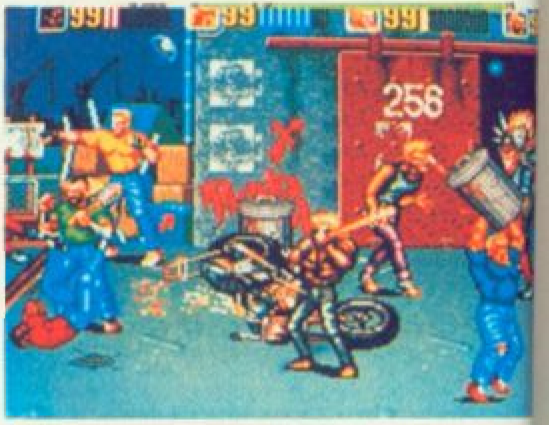
This month brings SEGA back into the limelight, with it's new 'holographic' system generating floating 3D images, plus a new dedicated unit that brings a new meaning to 'motion simulator' and the pick of the latest releases, brought to you by the man with loose change, John Cook.



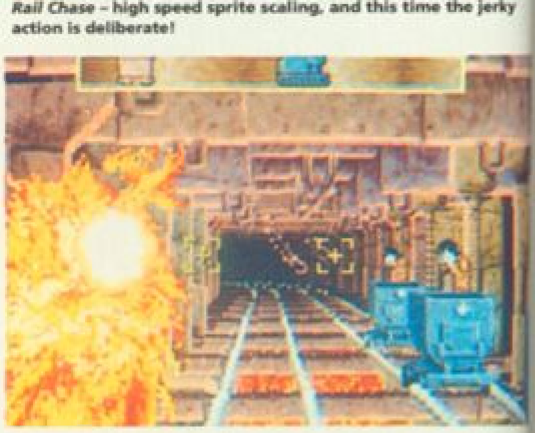
Over the years, each coin-op company has developed its own unique reputation for a particular style of game. Atari produce mainstream, but occasionally wildly off beam games. Irem go for well polished shoot-'em-ups, Toaplan just throw billions of sprite at the screen and tell you to get on with it! And Sega, the Big Daddy of them all? I guess the whole of the industry looks towards Sega for, above all, technical innovation.

In the mid-eighties, Sega addressed itself to the problem of Sprite Scaling and Manipulation. This produced games like *OutRun*, *Afterburner*, *Thunderblade* and *Power Drift* - and further development has produced games like *Line of Fire* and now *Rail Chase* that would have been thought impossible a few years back.

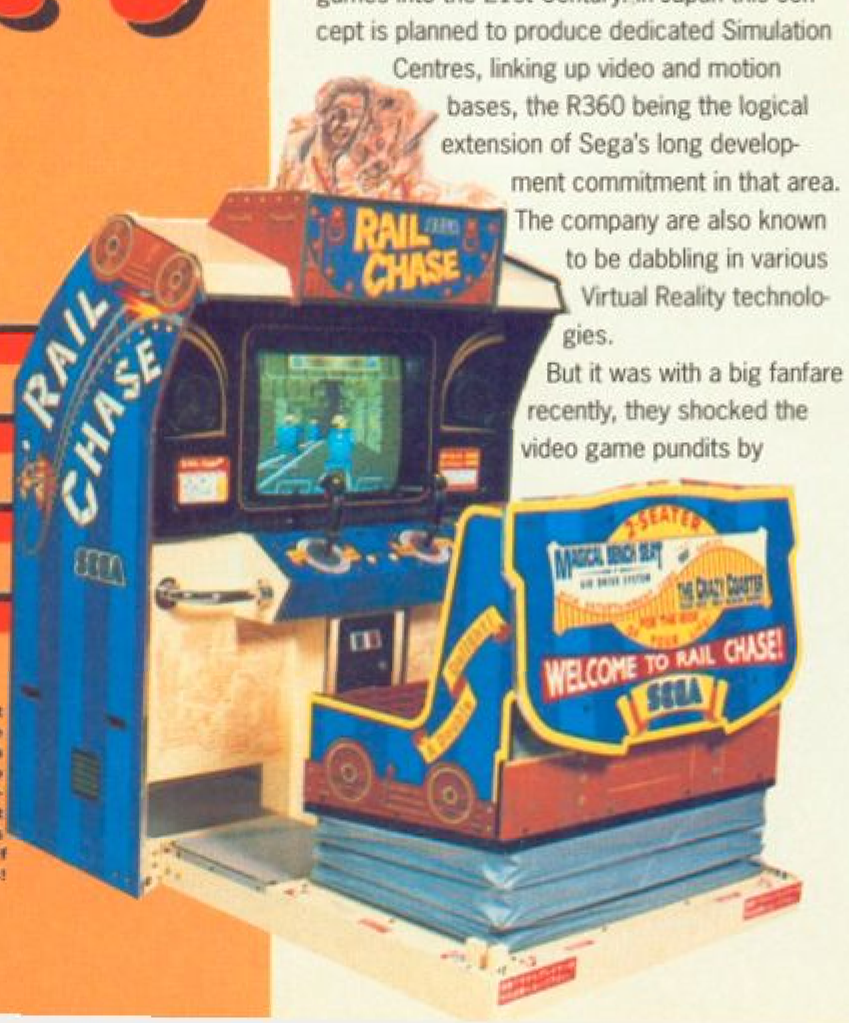
Not content with domination of this part of the industry, however, Sega are constantly looking forward, trying to move the concept of video games into the 21st Century. In Japan this concept is planned to produce dedicated Simulation Centres, linking up video and motion bases, the R360 being the logical extension of Sega's long development commitment in that area. The company are also known to be dabbling in various Virtual Reality technologies.



Rail Chase – high speed sprite scaling, and this time the jerky action is deliberate!



Konami's *Vendetta*: 'The Dead End city was being controlled by Faust and the slime balls of his Dead-End gang...However the Cobras, a group of the four of the toughest guys in the city, joined together to put a stop to the Dead End Gang's evil ways..'



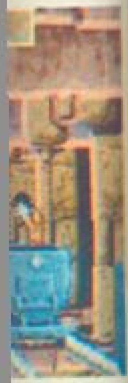
The *Rail Chase* cabinet uses fairground-style graphic design and a 'Magical Bench Seat' to give a traditional roller-coaster impression, but the manufacturer's warn you not to play if you've got piles!

But it was with a big fanfare recently, they shocked the video game pundits by announcing a new Holographic video game system - and what's more, it was a system that was affordable by the average arcade owner. We waited with baited breath, and *Time Traveller* was launch upon the world last week.

The good news is that it's great - a wonderfully novel display that projects the figures into space, so you feel that you are almost playing with real animated people. The bad news, by my dictionary definition, it's not a real hologram.

The technology used by this system takes a video image from an ordinary monitor (fed by a laser disc in this instance) and uses a parabolic mirror to project this screen onto a platform, so the image appears in mid-air. Now, if this was Neighbours, it would look rather odd - but if you use chromakey technology to matte out the background of any footage, the effect really is

the jerky



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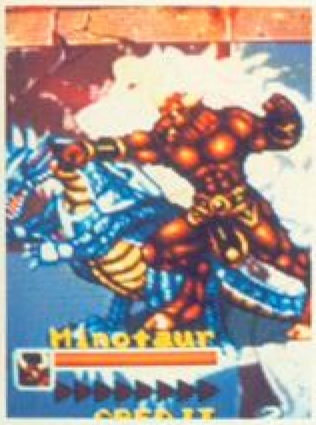
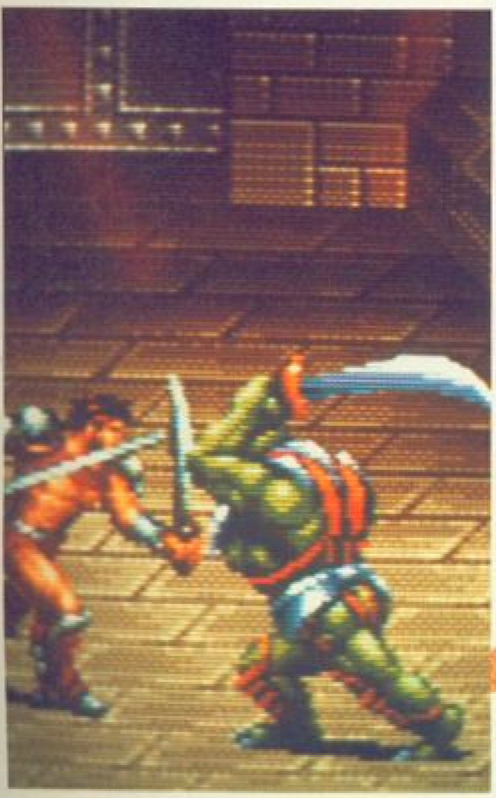
One side effect of the new technology in Sega's 'holographic' system is that it's very difficult to photograph, but the real-life effect is undeniably impressive...



A couple of the punchbags in *Heroes*...



Chop chop in *Blade Master*

very convincing.

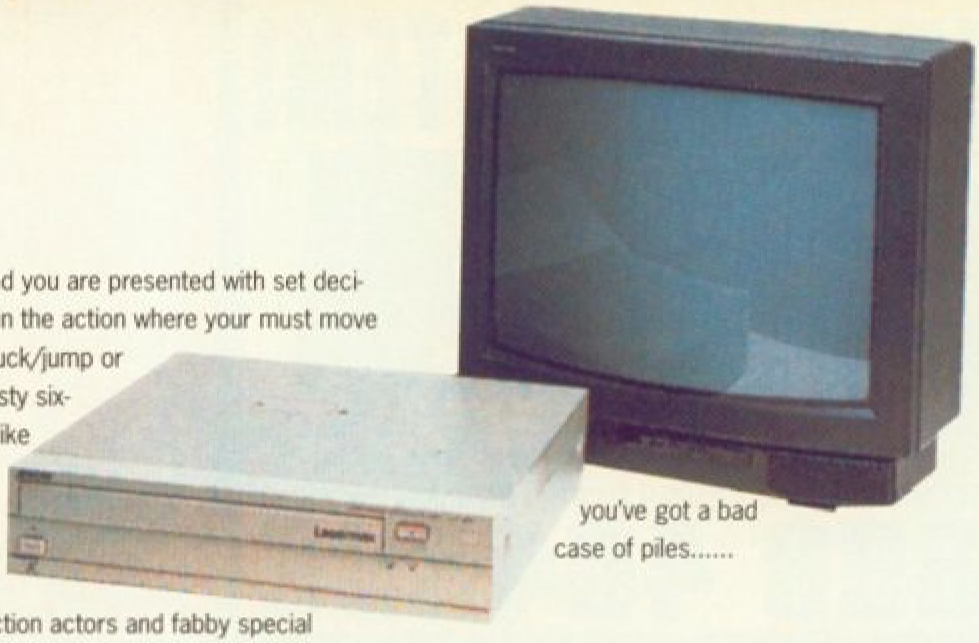
There are limitations as to how big the images can be (it seems to be about 3-4 inches high) and unless you are standing right in front of the unit, the image gets strangely distorted - but there's no denying that the novelty of the effect alone would be prove a big crowd puller. That fact that Sega has put a decent game inside it should make it very successful indeed, even in the present dire economic climate.

Time Traveller is a style of game not unlike *Dragon's Lair*, only rather more sophisticated in nature. You play the role of a Wild West Lawman, Marshal Gram, who has to move through time from Prehistory to the 26th Century in order to defeat the chief baddy (evil renegade scientist Vulcor) and save the cutesie Princess, Kyi-La (or should that be Kyi-Lee??).

Like *Dragon's Lair*, sequences are drawn off laserdisc and you are presented with set decision points in the action where your must move left/right, duck/jump or fire your trusty six-shooter. Unlike *Dragon's Lair*, all the sequences are filmed using live action actors and fabby special effects. Believe me, this looks good. To add to the variety, according to Sega Europe's MD Vic Leslie, the 20 or so scenes that can potentially make up a game are drawn from over 60 sequences stored on the disc - so it's unlikely that you'll ever play two games that will be exactly the same.

Undoubtedly, the game plays well, with a neat buy-in feature of Time Reversal that plays a scene backwards if you got killed, so you can try it again - and the data is sensibly stored on the disc so there are no long blackouts between scenes.

Have a go if you see one - you'll enjoy the experience... but I wish that they hadn't called it a hologram...



Some of the off-the-shelf technology concealed within Sega's 'holographic' cabinet: , a Sony 12" laserdisc player and NTSC colour TV

PILE UP!

Sega releases tend to come all at once - so while *Time Traveller* was being shown for the first time, so was a whole host of new Sega titles, the best of which was *Rail Chase*.

This one is decidedly influenced by the Mine Truck sequence in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* and has you, or you plus a mate, sitting on a bench seat and clutching a joystick.

The idea is that, having penetrated the HQ of an Andean drug ring, released slaves and pilfered a valuable Inca treasure (clever you, eh?), you now find yourself looking out the front of a rail car, racing out of control along tunnels and tracks filled with baddies. What's more, if you don't get a move on, there are Super Baddies chasing you from behind.

Your only control is a gunsight, with which you shoot anything that moves and anything that's blocking the way of the track. Meanwhile, the bench you're sitting on moves about and vibrates like mad - so it's like trying to do target practice on the back of a bucking bronco! This is a real hoot!

The screen, despite being made up almost completely of sprites, moves towards you fast and very realistically, as you get assaulted by sundry Baddies, Bats and in the end, Aircraft. Not exactly intellectually absorbing, but damn fine all the same - the only surprise is that it does carry a warning about not playing the thing is you've got a bad case of piles......

THE BEST OF THE REST............

HEROES - DATA EAST

Data East's best thing since *Midnight Resistance* has you taking on the role of one of eight creatures who are fighting for the Throne of the Realm. With 19 different moves open to you (from a joystick plus two fire buttons) it's probably the thinking man's answer to *Final Fight II*, but you can't fail to be impressed with the sound and graphics job. This one will go far.

BLADE MASTER - IREM

Irem are well known for their sci-fi shoot-'em-ups, but this is a first into the pixie bash stakes - and it's a most impressive debut. A very distinctive graphic style, with stylish animation makes this a visual treat, although you might find the gameplay a little simplistic. Think of it as being an Impressionist kind of *Golden Axe*....

CROSSED SWORDS - NEO GEO

Now that some classy Japanese developers are taking the Neo Geo seriously, there have been some cracking releases for it in the past few months. Latest is *Crossed Swords*, developed by the team that gave you *Dead Angle* and *Dynamite Duke*. This uses a similar control system, but is set in the days of yore when you had to use a sword rather than a laser. Not bad.

VENDETTA - KONAMI

I tend to dislike beat-em ups but this one has taken so much care over the animation of the sprites and imagination in the number of ways you can hit, mutilate and be thoroughly unsociable to the Bad Guys that I found myself warming to it. Up to four players get to rescue the obligatory girlie, one of which is a passable imitation of that wonderful role model, Hulk Hogan.

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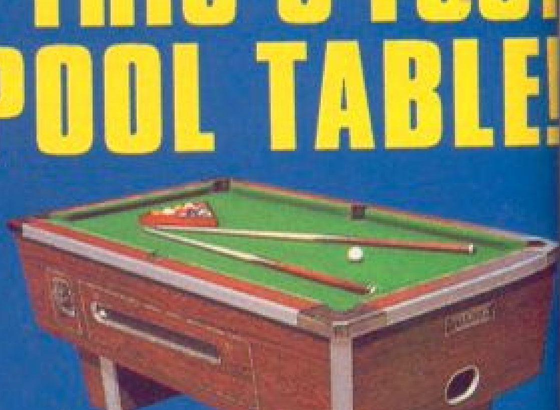

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Virgin Territory

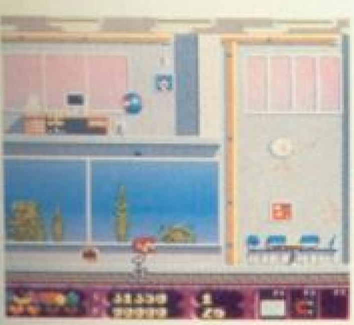
Readers infiltrate Virgin HQ in the latest no-holds-barred ACE Conference...

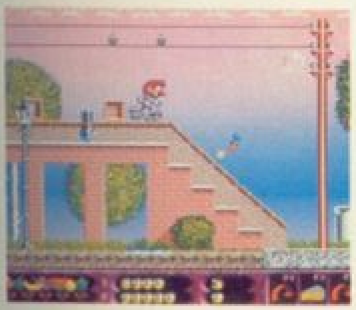
'Let's face it,' Virgin supremo Nick Alexander told the assembled ACE visitors, 'back in 1983 when we started, you had to be pretty stupid not to make lots of money...'

These were brave words from Nick, because at least one of those present (the octogenarian Steve Cooke) had vivid memories of 1983 and Virgin's *Owzat* – a legendary cricket title that, when you chose to change the team members, prompted you to 'EDIT LINE 140'. And that was probably the best bit about it. Turkeys of that ilk cast a sickly green hue over Virgin's image and, in those good old, bad old days, even Virgin themselves had to admit that most of their titles were a load of old gobblers.

What, however, would happen if right now you warped back to the early 80's, found Cooke hunched over *Owzat*, trying to work out where the ball was, whether the game had started and which team was playing, and told him What Was To Come. What would you have said? And what response would you have got?

You: Er... Steve...
Cooke *(for it is he)*: F*%$ %ff!
You: Ahem... I come from the future.
Cooke: Far out, man. *(Examines 'cigarette')* Either *Owzat* is getting to me or this is 'strong stuff'...
You: And I'm telling you that three hundred games companies are going to go bust in 1984...
Cooke: Virgin will be the first to go. I'll tell you that for nothing...
You: Er, actually they're going to get their act together...
Cooke: Tell us *(snigger)* another!
You: They will then release a string of hits, from the superlatively vintage *Dan Dare* through legendary titles like *Silkworm* to the stunning *Supremacy*...
Cooke: Guffaw!
You: They will champion top-league proggies like *Wonderland* and Infocom. They will launch Europe's first official Japanese 16-bit console...
Cooke: 16-bit? 16-bit what??
You: They will buy Mastertronic and





(top) *Rollin' Ronnie* was up and running in what appeared to be a finished version, and a damned fine playable little number it is too, sah! Out on PC, Amiga, and ST, this follower of the cute horizontal platform scroller school is as playable as the best in the genre. Ronnie skims along the road on skates but can attain to higher things via window ledges, rooves, walls and other suitably disguised platforms. Nine levels, teeming with bizarre, colourful, and well-animated nasties and some particularly odd power-ups!

(above) Out in the open, Ronnie contends with airborne beasties...and pigeon droppings...

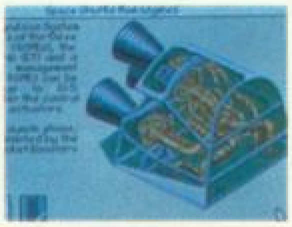
(above) David Eastman demonstrates *Floor 13* and the latest Virgin interface technology: David's finger is monitored by a Polhemus magnetic resonance locator linked to a double in-line NAND gate, allowing him to control the game simply by wiggling his finger. The unit is to be released in April 1992.

(left) Behind this innocent facade lurks a vast labyrinth of games mayhem. Programmers rushing up and down spiral staircases clutching carry-outs, bombshell receptionists breathing into high-tech phones, Megadrives blasting out *Terminator* soundtracks, Game Boy's squeaking, Master Systems beeping, and outside in the back yard the ACE conference visitors stuffing themselves with fruit and sandwiches...

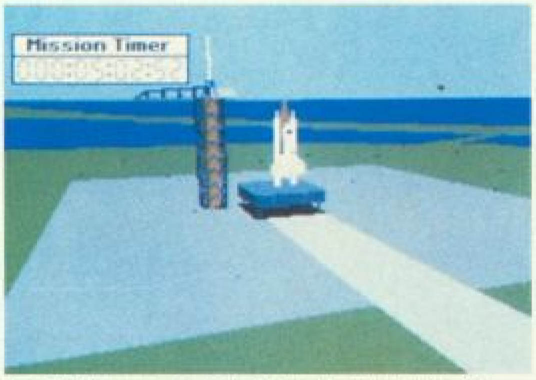
control one of the largest areas of computer entertainment, and they'll end up one of Britain's top software houses, finally being wooed, kissed, courted, and captured for £36 million by Sega...

With this last retort, you fade from the scene, leaving the withered old hack speechless. With a deep sigh, he removes the *Owzat* cassette and attempts to load a copy of *Wacky Waiters*... Meanwhile, back in 1991, Nick Alexander has departed, leaving the ACE readers gathered in the conference room at Virgin's West London headquarters. During the next five hours, they were caught up in a whirlwind of meticulously planned Virgin presentations; they met legendary developers, ranging from Virgin's own Andrew Wright to the redoubtable Archer *'IK+'* Maclean; they saw some of the country's first CDTV dedicated software actually up and running; they were among the first punters in Europe to see *Terminator* on the Megadrive; and they were able to try out for themselves a range of superb software on console and computer.

And YOU could have been there... if only you'd applied! Meanwhile, you can cast your envious eyes over these pages and see what you've been missing...



One of the information screens from the awesome *Shuttle*. Practically every conference attendee wanted a crack at this, though several readers were nervous about the inevitable high price that accompanies this level of sophistication and detail



The Shuttle prepares for take-off. The level of detail in this simulation of NASA's Space Shuttle is so high that one developer has claimed you could actually fly the real thing after training on Virgin's silicon system. The program enables you to fly missions ranging from scientific research to Star Wars offensives, as well as test flights and satellite recovery. Due out later this year for the PC (£44.99), ST (£39.99) and Amiga (£39.99).

Aha! Time for grub! The Virgin caterers did us proud – but the real star of the lunch break was a sneak preview of an American Game Boy version of *Prince of Persia* – absolutely stonkingly stunning, guvnor, and a must-must-have as soon as the carts arrive...

Superlative Sega Titles...

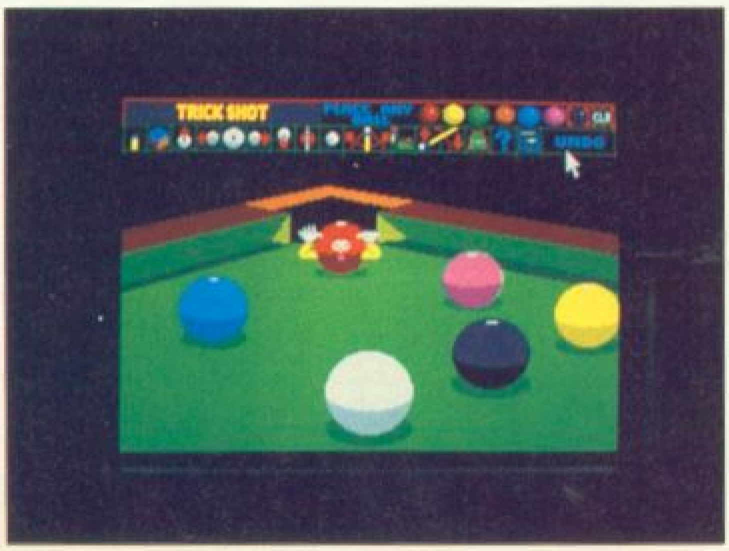
Unfortunately we were unable to bring you screenshots of *Terminator* on the Megadrive (tremendous sound and musical effects) or the classic *Marble Madness* on the Sega Master System. *MM* goes down really well on the 8-bit format, but *Terminator* is likely to be the star for ACE 16-bit connoisseurs. The opening sequence, for example, is practically indistinguishable from the film and the game features several digitised out-takes from the celluloid version. Gameplay is pretty traditional but there's lots of it and the speed, sound, and vigorous opposition make this one look like a very promising Megadrive blast-em-up.

It's Bugged!

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker, we have to report, is seriously bugged. Only seconds after relinquishing the mouse, flies begin to zip across the display, settling occasionally and even trotting up the screen before taking off again. Even worse, when left to themselves, the reds begin to display disturbingly disrespectful tendencies, sticking their tongues out at the player and behaving in a generally unacceptable fashion.

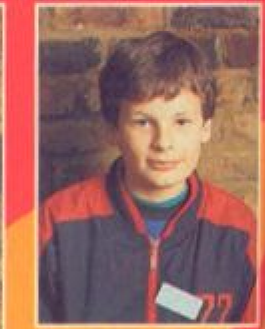
Bugs like this, it has to be said, elevate *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* from that status of superlative game to that of all-time classic. They're the hallmarks of programmer/designer Archer *'IK+'* Maclean, who delights in putting quirky finishing touches to his games. Take those flies, for example, which look extraordinarily convincing as they jitter about the screen during idle moments. 'They're very easy to do, really,' says Archer modestly, 'all they do is move in random 90 degree arcs, freezing occasionally and sometimes moving vertically up the screen.'

The rest of the game is superb – see the review elsewhere in this issue. And watch out for those bugs!



Disgraceful behaviour on Archer's baize. Judging by the position of the cue ball, punishment by pocketing is called for

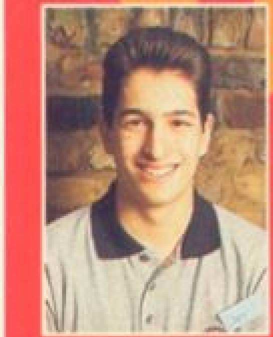
Arun Summers certainly voiced the majority opinion as he waxed lyrical over *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*. However, action titles like *Terminator* and *Rolling Ronnie* didn't make such a good impression... 'I'm keener on strategy,' explained Arun, who also admitted a strong attraction to *Realms*...



Thomas Ayles is a man of diverse tastes: on the one hand, he was bowled ove by the sound and graphic of Megadrive *Terminator*, and on the other he found himself applauding the presentation and digital audio speech of CDTV *Spiri of Excalibur*

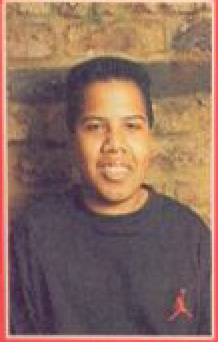
Meet Piers Finlayson, connoisseur of the complex and a master of political intrigue, who was naturally knocked fl by *Floor 13*. 'Now THAT's got depth,' he crooned, as *Floor 1* received rapturous applause from all quarters, though some twerps thought the stylish monochrome graphics were 'a mistake'

Here's Marcus *****, who forgot to write his surnam on his nametag and shall therefore be forever Marcu ****. He asserted his identity pretty strongly when it came to passing judgement on games, however, reckoning he would shell out for *Shuttle* ('depending on the price'), worshipping *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooke* and remarking that *Realm* looked pleasantly 'easy t get into'

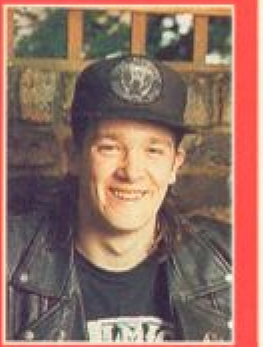


Joel Waxman was a great fan of the *Terminator* movie and must, as we rea this, be queuing up for a viewing of *Terminator 2*. Meanwhile, he was knock over by Megadrive *Terminator* – 'It looks real excellent,' he said, pointin out that anyone who reckoned the game idea was a bit well-worn should remember that there's a very good reason why the same recipe keeps reappearing: because it's s damn' good!

Nick Arnold maintained a steadfast silence through muc of the conference, inducing deep nervousness in Virgin staff, who thought he might have been an undercover agent for Nintendo. Over lunch, however, he admitted t being potted by *Jimmy White* (even though 'I'm not normally keen on arcade stuff') and very impressed by th SFX on CDTV *Excalibur*.



No nonsense about Liam Dystant – this lad got full marks for taking a very active role in the proceedings, offering some sharp observations on many of the games on show. *Snooker*, reckons Liam, 'is a definite buy.' but he was also quick to spot some of the slow disk access times and action sequences in *Excalibur* that, he reckoned, might take some of the shine off the finished product. Virgin, it should be noted, took all this on board and reckoned that the final version would solve the problem...



Paul Mellerick staggered into the conference having survived a car journey from Leicester, and then proceeded to take an outspoken role in the conference, during which he confessed to being particularly impressed with *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* – but then so was everyone else. As one of two Megadrive owners, Paul found himself leaving the conference with unexpected riches – not only a copy of *Moonwalker* but also the promise of – gasp – a free copy of *Sonic the Hedgehog* as soon as the company could get one posted to him. Yay!

Why don't YOU come next time?

We're holding ACE conferences on a regular basis around the country at software houses large and small. If you think you might be interested in attending one, all you have to do is send us a postcard with your name and address clearly legible, together with a telephone number so that we can get hold of you.

You need to tell us which software houses you would be interested in attending, so note that US Gold, Mirrorsoft, Virgin, Gremlin, and Domark have already been featured; that's not to say that we won't be visiting them again, but it's likely to be later rather than sooner. We also need to know how old you are and which machine you own, so that we can plan a good spread of age groups at each conference.

Obviously we have to limit the number of people attending each conference because of space and staffing considerations. In addition, we have to make a nominal charge of £5.00 to cover costs. All places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. There is, however, an exception to these conditions: as a special offer to subscribers we are giving them priority allocations for the first five places in each conference and they may also attend free of charge. You can find out how to become a subscriber on page 86.

Shortly before each conference we select the lucky readers from those who have applied and inform them of the relevant details. If anyone can't attend, they'll be shortlisted for future conferences and another selection will be made for someone to take their place. Please note that although we can sometimes arrange for lifts from railway stations, etc, it is your responsibility to provide your own transport to and from the conference location.

Forthcoming conferences planned include The Bitmap Brothers at Renegade (in London), Core (in Derby), Sierra (near Reading), and Ocean (in Manchester).

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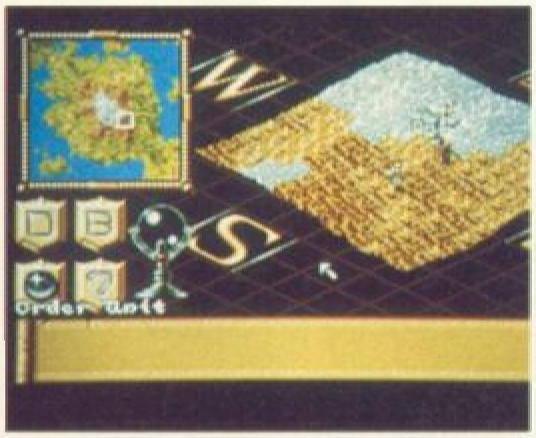
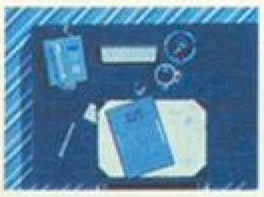
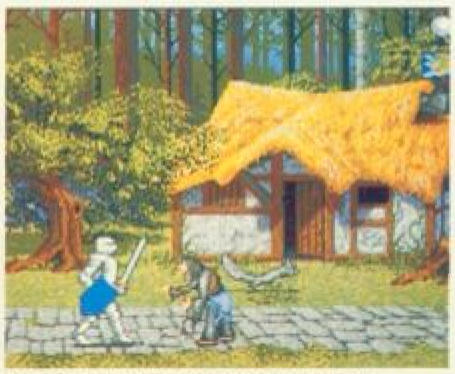


Virgin are making no bones about *Realms*: it's designed to be *Powermonger*-basher. Programmed by Graftgold, it uses fractal-style graphics to create the familiar isometric display as you use money, power, and military strategy to consolidate your own realm before extending a blood-stained handshake to your neighbours. *Realms* was universally popular with ACE conference attendees and even the loyal *Populous/Powermonger* fans amongst them were impressed by the extended gameplay options. Due out in October for Amiga, ST (both £29.99) and PC (£34.99)



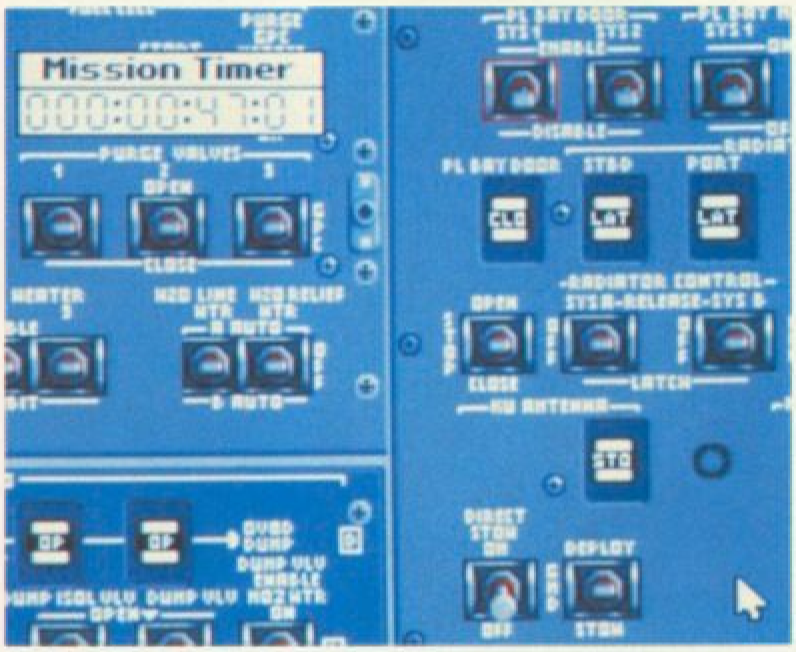
Floor 13 generates a brooding atmosphere with its monochrome graphics, designed by the talented Carl Cropley who did the superb pics for EA's *Hound of Shadows*. Virgin claim *Floor 13* is based on actual events: developed by PSI, who wrote *Conflict*, it puts you in charge of a mysterious organisation in a Docklands office block. Your task is to use any means at your disposal (they include everything from murder to infiltration) to protect the government from political damage...without ever being found out. Out in late October for PC, ST, and Amiga at £29.99 (PC £34.99)

(right) The man who put it all together: Virgin conference director David Bishop, whose meticulous planning gave everybody a day to remember... and a few goodies to take away as well. Our thanks to David and his team for all their help in making this one of the most enjoyable conferences to date...



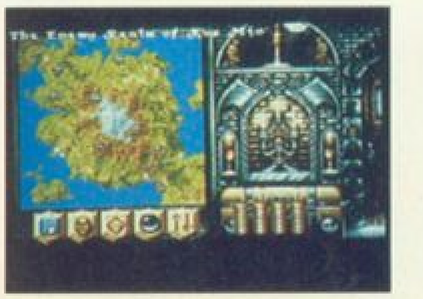
Spirit of Excalibur on the CDTV looks pretty similar to the standard Amiga version, but just wait till you hear the speech!

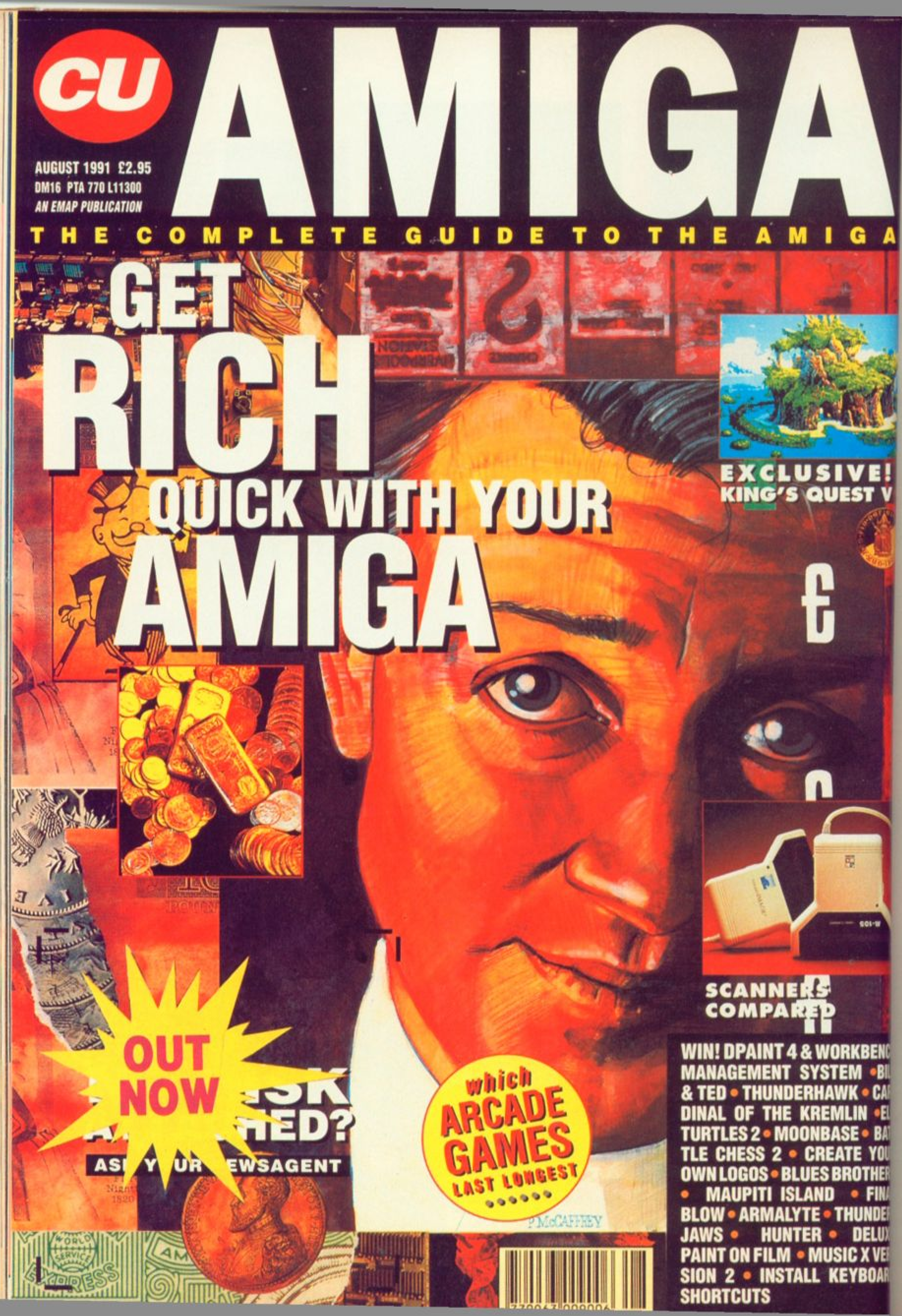
(left) Steve Clarke, boss of Virgin's new media division, demonstrates the advantages of CDTV and compact disk software



(left) One of the tremendous features of *Shuttle* is that the instrument panels are accurately reproduced in the simulation – and the switches actually work!

(below) *Realms* uses fractal-style maps and scaling, resulting in an effect similar to the displays in *Midwinter*. Five terrains are featured in the game, together with up to 16 computer players, thirty cities, enhanced artificial intelligence, and everything from natural disasters to straight-forward military confrontation.





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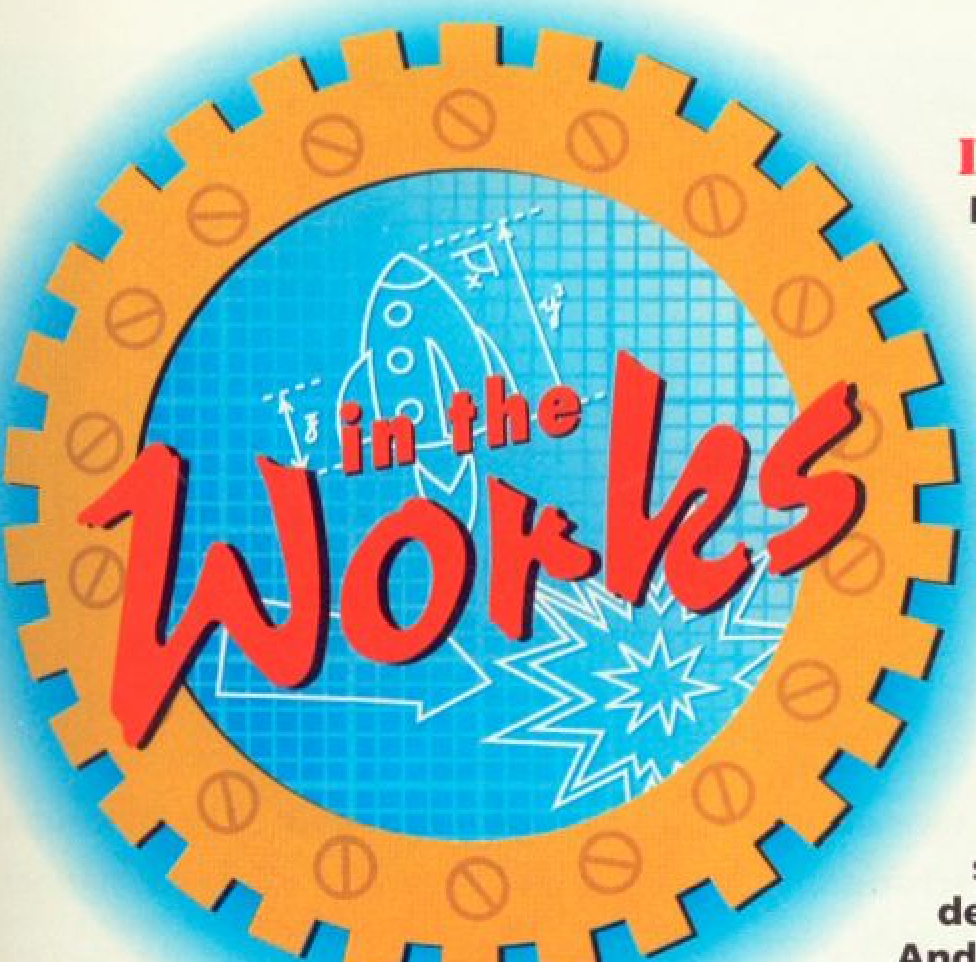


CAUTION:

DEVELOPERS AT WORK

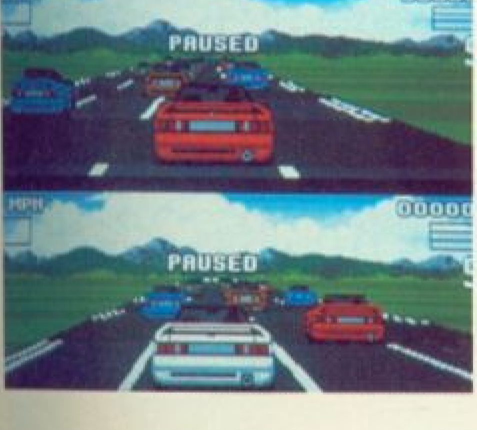
HARD HATS MUST BE WORN IN THIS SECTION

Yes, you must be careful to wear protective goggles before turning the page and entering this month's In The Works. You never know when you could get hit by a fast-flying piece of exclusive, or caught in a dangerous shower of sharp development information. And make sure you wear only loose clothing, because everything about In The Works this month is so HOT!

As usual we've been sticking our nose where it's not wanted to bring YOU the most exclusive, incisive and interesting information on the most blistering up-and-coming games, including in-depth interviews with the people who matter and close-up analysis of the game actually AS it is being written! Better start unbuttoning that shirt (and your trousers too, if you're of a particularly weak disposition)...

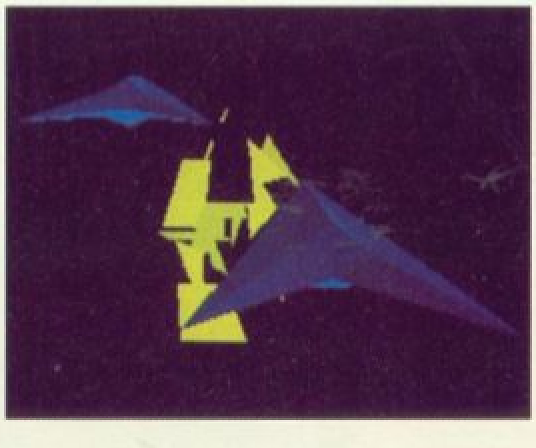
40 LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE 2

The hottest racing game of last year is back, with better everything! Hey, and we're not kidding either. Jim Douglas has seen it. Just wait until you clock the stuff that Magnetic Fields is cramming into the summer's most eagerly-awaited sequel. It will blow your mind!



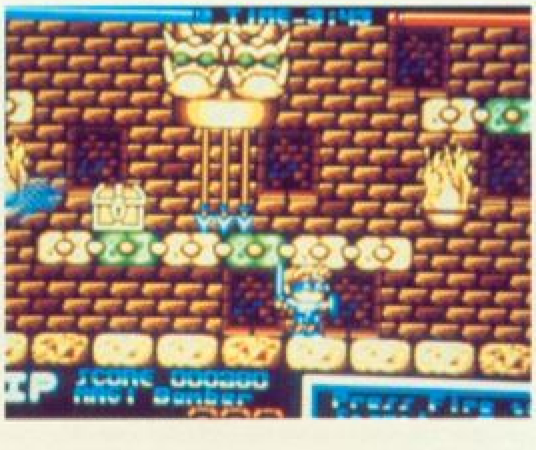
42 EYE OF THE STORM

Jason Kingsley, the author of Murder and Blade Warrior tries his hand at Elite-style space-age combat-trading-strategy-action adventure in the latest from Empire. We've got all the gen, so just flick those little pages right on up to the number 42...



46 MEGA TWINS

US Gold's latest CapCom coin-op conversion marries the cutesy gameplay of Rainbow Islands with the unmatchable programming pedigree of top developers Tiertex. David Upchurch talks to the boyz in the hood to find out what's going down, bro. Yo.



LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE II

Sucking the very marrow from the driving genre, GREMLIN prepare to release another stick-shift sensation. With the barrel of originality thoroughly scraped, what new apples can developers Magnetic Fields promise?

Last November, *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge* found itself the reviewers' darling. It was a peculiar situation that amid so many heavyweight driving sims and coin-op conversions, a sprite-driven arcade game with a surprisingly basic premise (no shooting or barging or polygons or spies) was adored so universally by critics and paying customers alike.

The secret, clearly, was Lotus' partaking of that *Kick-Off*-esque property, the Larf Factor. There was no mincing around selecting which tyre compound is best. No engine overheat to worry about. No pulling into the pits for an oil change. Just staying on the road and going as fast as possible and winning.

The game held together so well and felt so natural to play, you could be forgiven for thinking that it was a one-off hit. A bit of a software star that just happened to come together in the right way at the right time, whose sequel would almost certainly fall flat.

But Gremlin are confident that they've hit on the magic formula again, and predict an even better-rounded product with *Lotus 2.*

FALSE START?

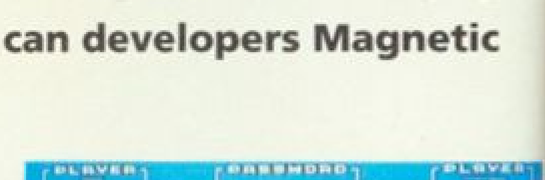
The Lotus follow-up was never a certainty. Although the first title was such a hit, both Gremlin and Magnetic Fields were concerned that the sequel might be constrained too tightly by Lotus' demands that their cars weren't shown being blown up or smashed. A perfectly understandable request from Lotus could be seen to curb the blockbuster excitement which any sequel needs. In the early stages, Gremlin were tempted to produce a non-licensed semi-sequel with all the high-octane smashes and crashes.

In the end, however, it was decided that the Lotus name was vital and new angles should be explored in order to spice up the formula.

WHATEVER THE WEATHER

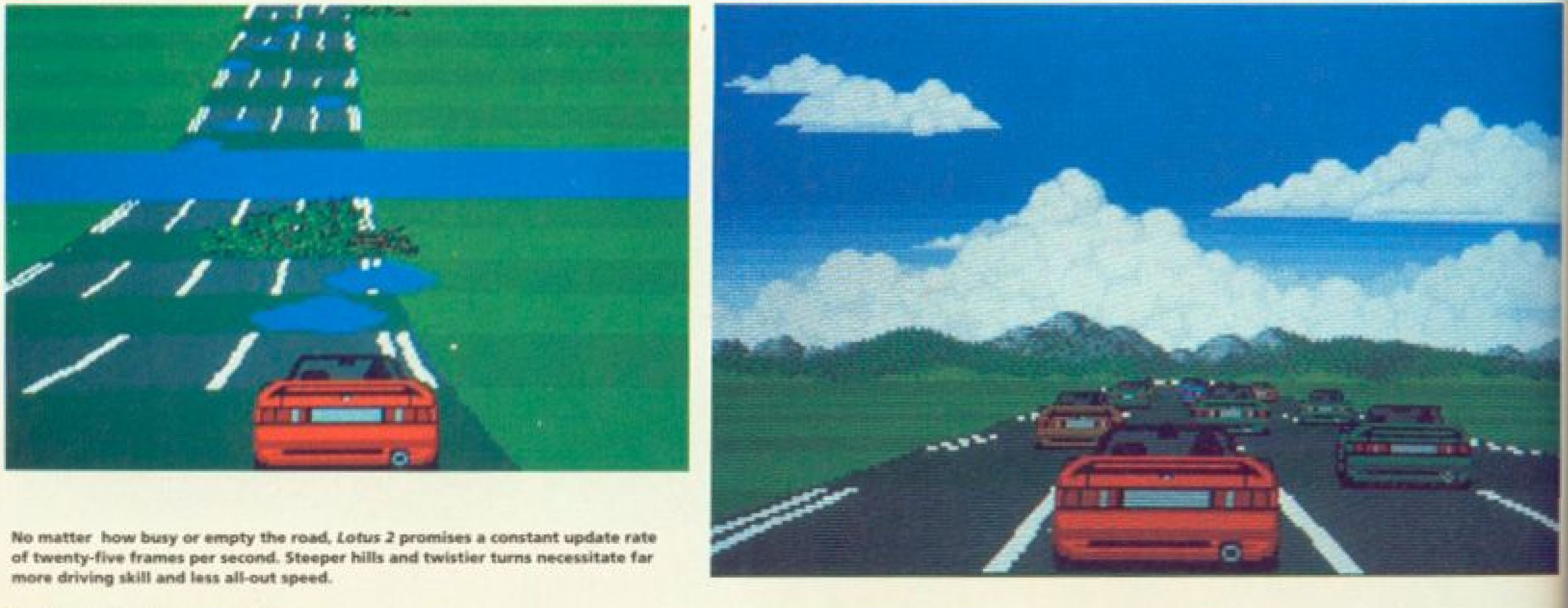
As any driver will tell you, Mother Nature proves to be an opponent every bit as formidable as the cars you're racing against. Each stage of *Lotus 2* features a different driving environment and, far from being simply a different graphics setup, each environment poses a bunch of car-control problems for the driver.

On snowy sections, the steering becomes light, almost like driving in a skid-pan, and the drivers' vision is hampered by falling snow and rain. Examine the track-breakdown for more detail.

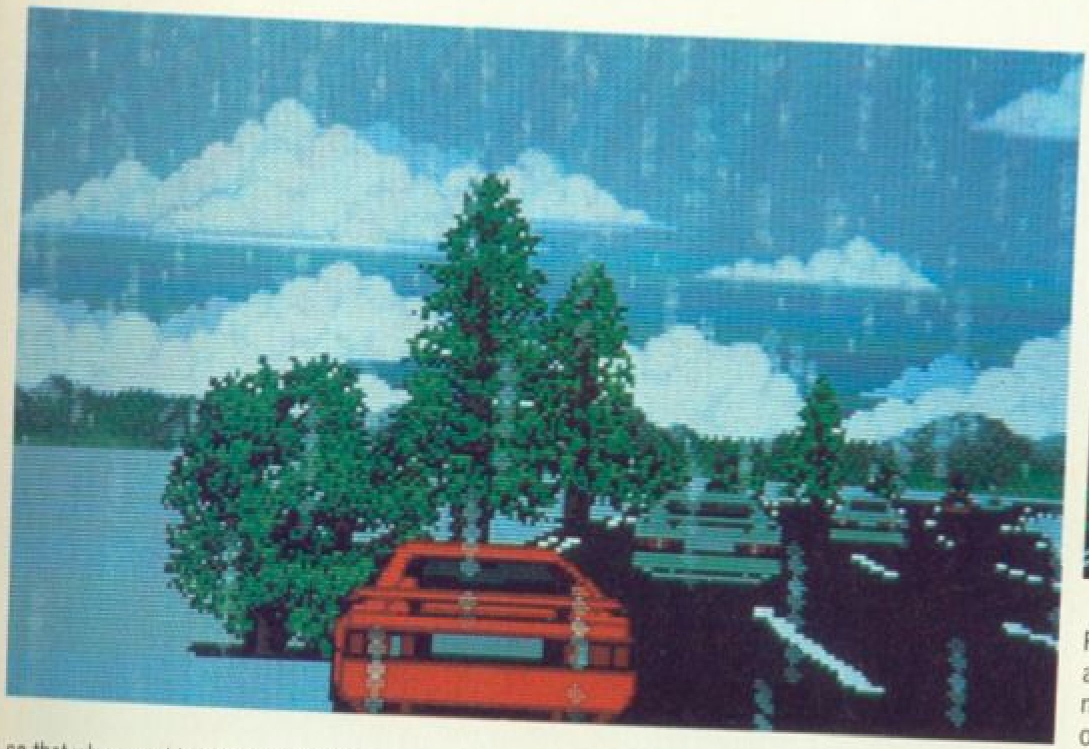


"The basic aim of the eight levels," says Shaun Southern, chief programmer, "is to create a different atmosphere on each stage. The extra effects such as lightning, overlaid snow and rain, sparks on the tunnel walls, smoking wheels, etc, should do the trick."

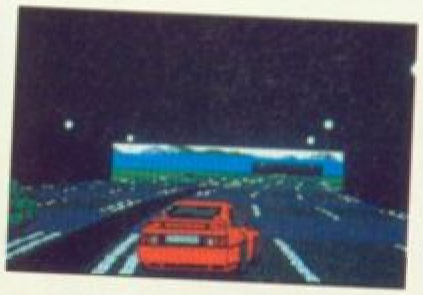
A criticism of the first game was that hitting a road-side object would virtually put you out of the race. "This time, we've improved the playability



No matter how busy or empty the road, *Lotus 2* promises a constant update rate of twenty-five frames per second. Steeper hills and twistier turns necessitate far more driving skill and less all-out speed.



Hitting roadside obstacles is considerably less frustrating than in Lotus 2, since you're positioned back onto the track immediately.



so that when you hit a sign or another car, you're not left stuck at the side of the track. Instead, you're thrown back onto the road and into play as soon as possible. This way we've been able to be quite tight on the times for each level, making for a more exciting race."

The speed of the game matches the first, although is unlikely to beat it. "We're looking at twenty-five frames per second on average".

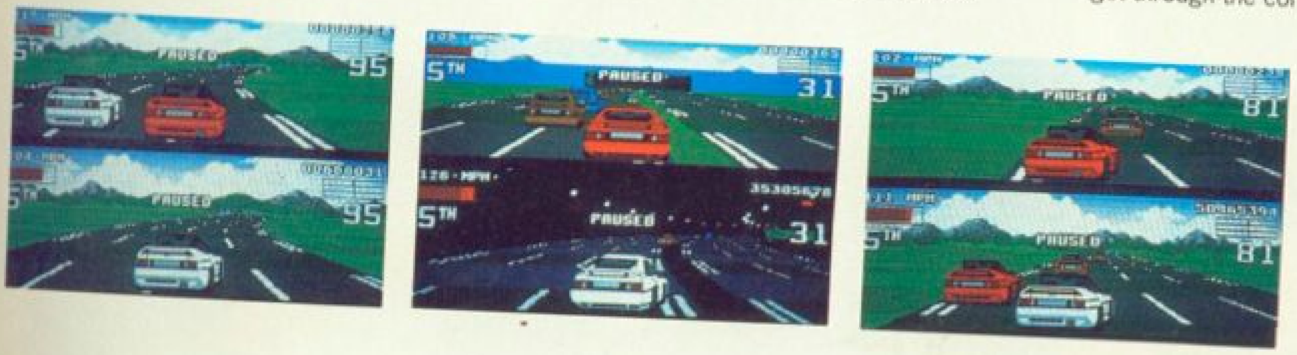
YES, MASTER

The two-player option worked so well in the first game, the team had their work cut out for them when trying to produce an improvement.

Players can now link up two machines, Amiga and ST. By selecting a slave machine, and a master, three players can race against each other, one playing with a full screen, and the others in two-player mode on the other machine.

THE CARS

Both the Lotus Esprit and the Elan are raced during the game, on alternate stages. "Esprits have far better straight-line acceleration," says Shaun, "although the Elan has better handling, so can get through the corners quicker".



White overtakes red! Red floors the gas and makes a desperate challenge, and... overtakes white! The two-player mode is made an even tighter contest thanks to the tuning of the track-repositioning. No more lead-from-the-start no contest scenarios here!

PAR FOR THE COURSE

The eight stages of the game, when added together, comprise a whopping hour's worth of straight driving, so it's good news that each section has a bunch of new backgrounds and conditions for the players to deal with. Each stage will be preceded by a map, showing progress through the stage and, of course, the upcoming section.

1.The Forest
Fairly hilly. Lots of trees and bushes. Logs can be used to bounce over rivers. Rubble in the road provides an extra hazard.

2. The City
Haring down the main strip and blasting through tunnels, players will face oncoming traffic in the other lanes. They'll have the option to use the wrong lane for extra-brave overtaking moves.

3. Desert
Drifting from the centre of the road will slow down the player's car as he loses traction in the sand. Cactii line the road and the absence of road signs makes it difficult to stay on course.

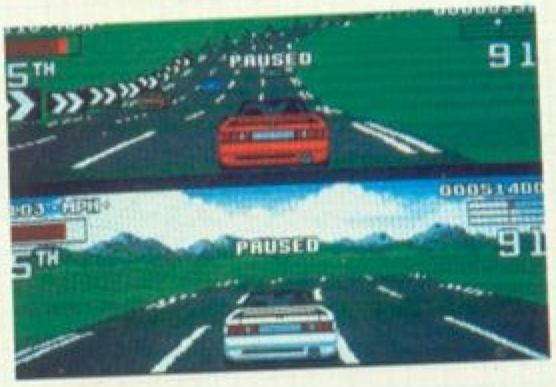
4. Snow
Extreme slippiness with plenty of steep bends and hills. Drivers are kept on their toes as the snow makes viewing the road up ahead extremely tricky. Slower times on this stage are to be expected.

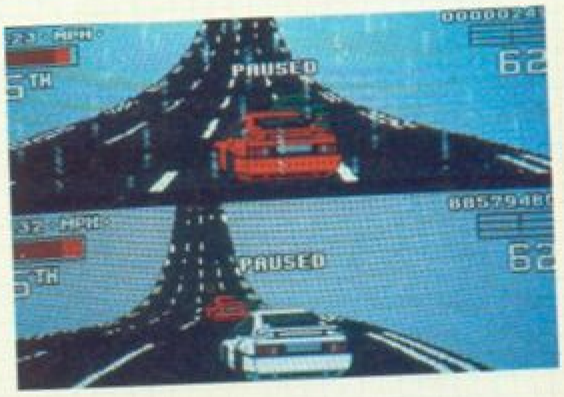
5. Fog
The players will have even more difficulty dealing with poor visibility in this level, with objects appearing later than usual. Further hampered by twisty bends and blind hills, this will probably prove to be the slowest stage.

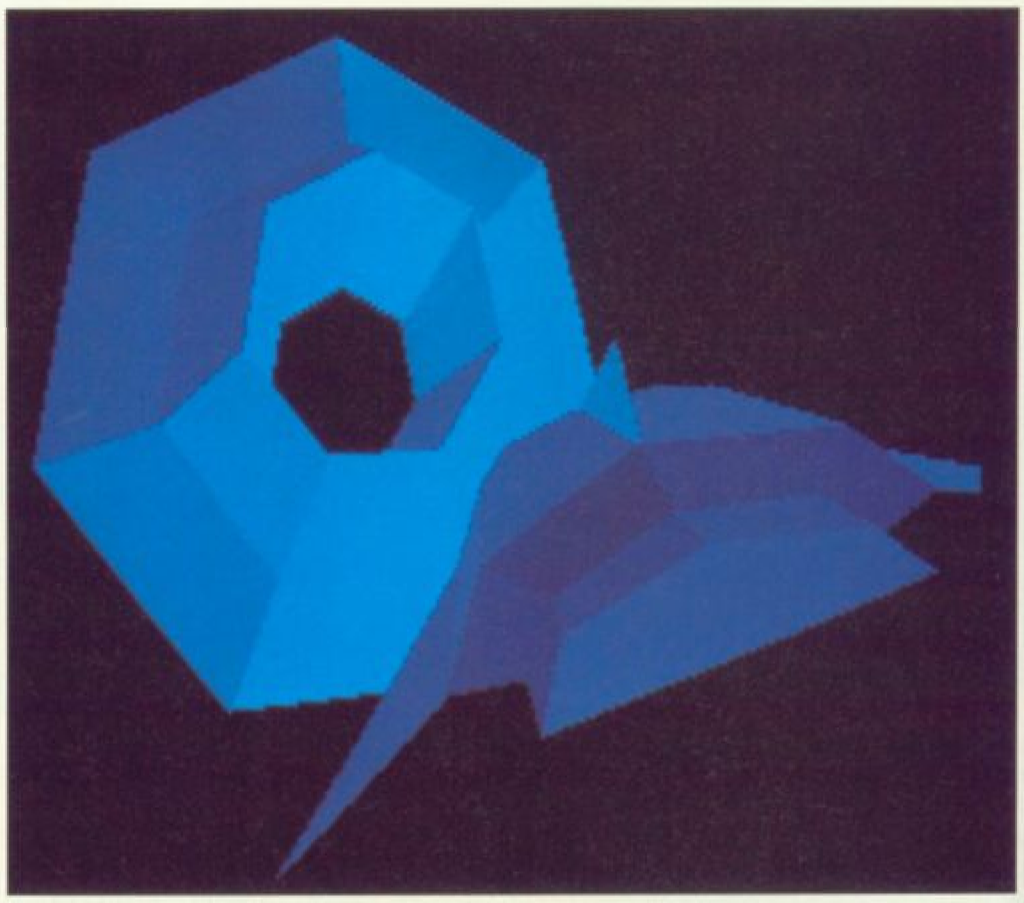
6. Night
The nighttime section takes place in the city with a wide road and headlight effects given off from the cars.

7. Marshland
Through more tunnels and over jumps. Oil patches cause big skids. Water alongside the road.

8. The Storm
Rain, rain and more rain. Vision hampered by lightning, tricky hills. Puddles slow down the player.
Any of the eight stages can be accessed by entering the appropriate password.







EYE OF THE STORM

Ever wanted to play a game like *Elite*, but where you could do whatever you liked? Empire and Jason Kingsley have got the solution - and we've got the details.

That Jason Kingsley is, by all accounts, a bit of a geezer. He was responsible for the innovative arcade adventure *Blade Warrior* for Image Works (which is only now, after several delays, seeing the light of day) and put together the rather nifty whodunnit *Murder* for US Gold. Now he's back with a vengeance once more, this time with a game that's a little bit like *Elite* - except it isn't.

Eye Of The Storm's scenario is as complex and elaborate as the game itself promises to be. The whole thing revolves around the planet Jupiter (the largest planet in the solar system and known as a gas giant due to its particularly volatile and stormy composition).

Well, you know that big red spot that Jupiter's got? Right, well that's called the *Eye of the Storm*, you see? The idea is that in the future life has been found inside the red planet's eye, and under interplanetary law the area is designated a free-for-all zone for scavengers, mercenaries and whoever else is interested in exploiting the region. You play one such merc, a maverick scientist who has come to the eye in his spaceship with an eye on making a fast buck, and, as an overall goal, achieving control of the eye.

"The idea for *Eye of the Storm* comes from a whole variety things, sci-fi movies and the like. I particularly like the whole *Star Trek* idea of venturing into space and discovering new things. And I suppose it's also got something to do with my imagination when it comes to strange creatures and monsters.

So far as the game itself is concerned, I wanted to create something that I could play, and would be able to come back to six months later.

"The idea was to make something that was different every time you played it, and that's why I wanted to steer right away from games like *Elite* which have a very linear game design. *Eye of the Storm* is more like a web of different ideas and elements which are all networked together, so you can play the game any way you like. There is combat, but you don't have to fight. There is trading, but you don't have to trade. I think games like *Elite* can get very boring and repetitive - buy something here, have a dogfight, sell it somewhere else - and that's just the sort of thing we've tried to avoid."

Isn't designing a game with a more surreal structure a more torturous affair than the familiar method? "Well, yes and no," says Kingsley surprisingly. "It's actually easier in some ways because it requires less work to make it different. No, let me put that another way. Because it's networked, you don't have to consciously tie stuff together because the player can just go wherever he wants."

The game itself is played, on the surface at least, in the traditional *Elite*-style, from the cockpit of your craft as you fly around Jupiter's gaseous atmosphere, fighting with other mercs (who are there after the same ends as your own), running missions and, as an interesting touch, exploring and surveying as much of the area as possible, seeking out new life forms for cash

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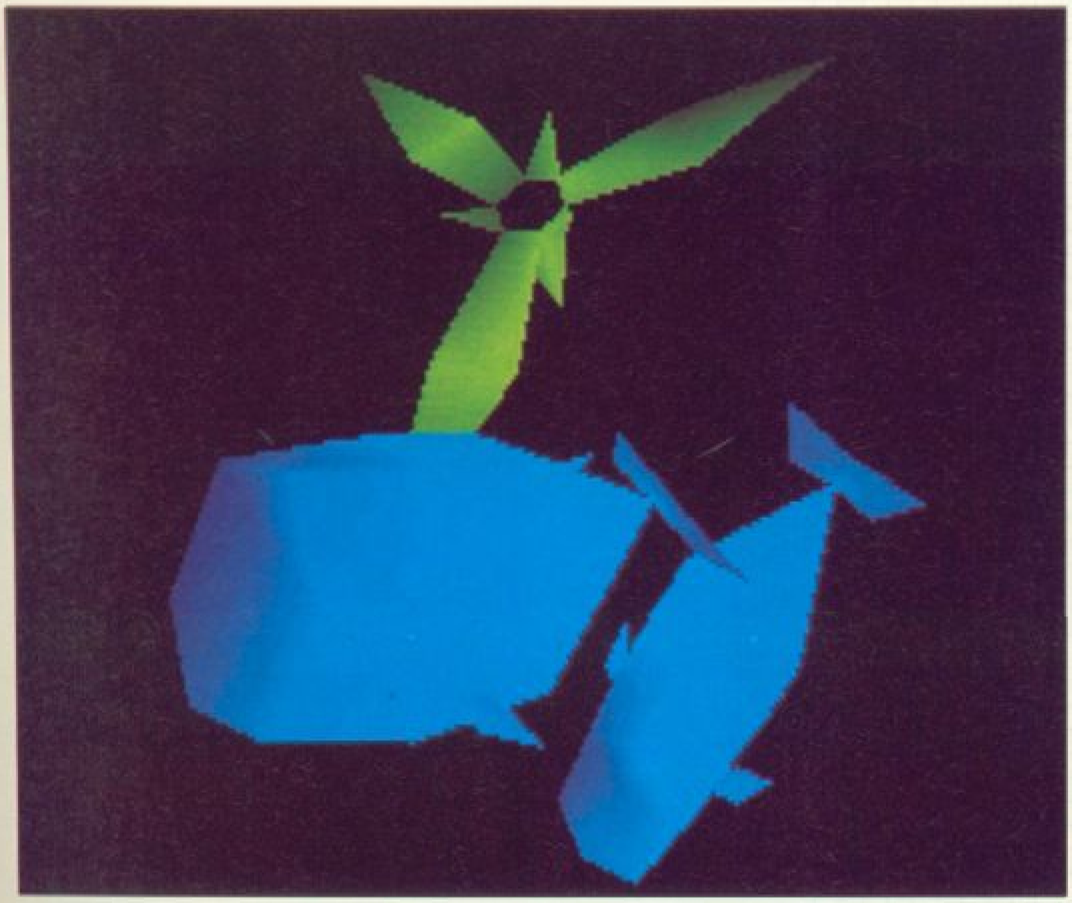

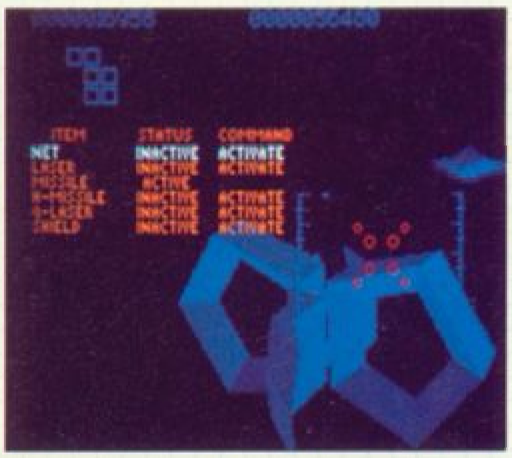
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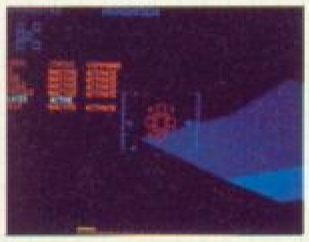

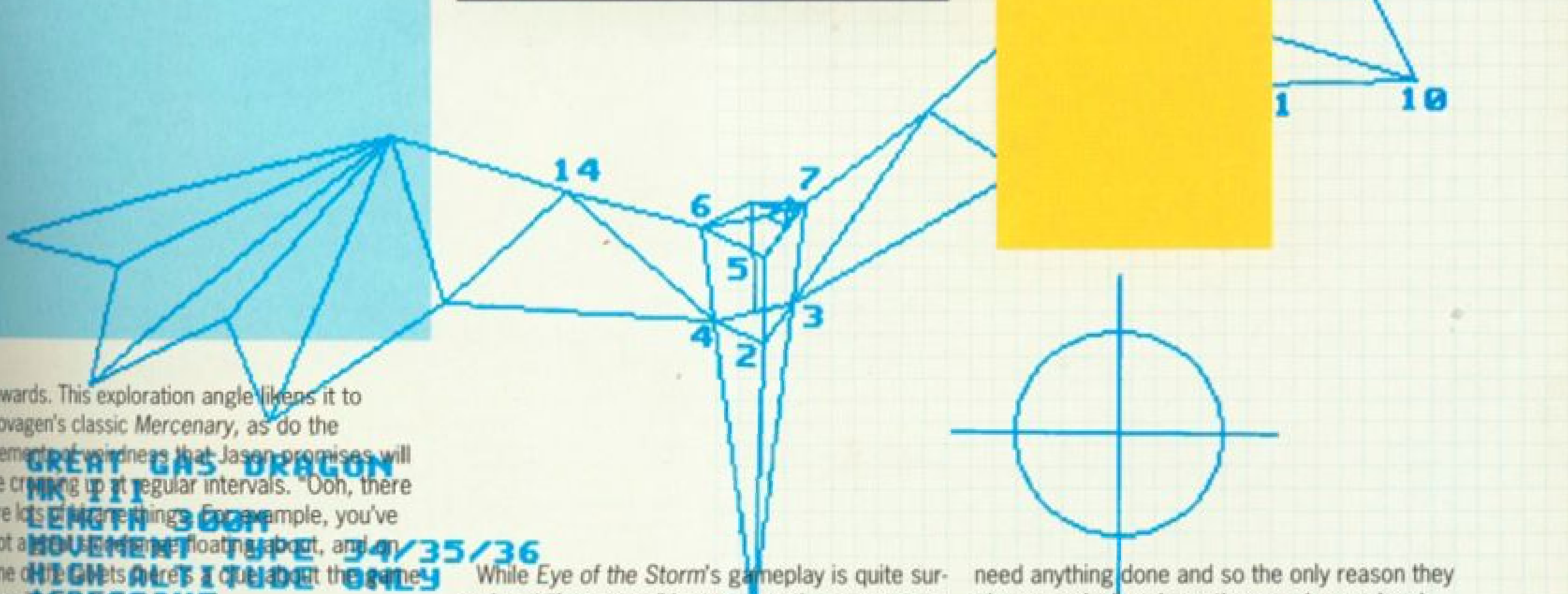
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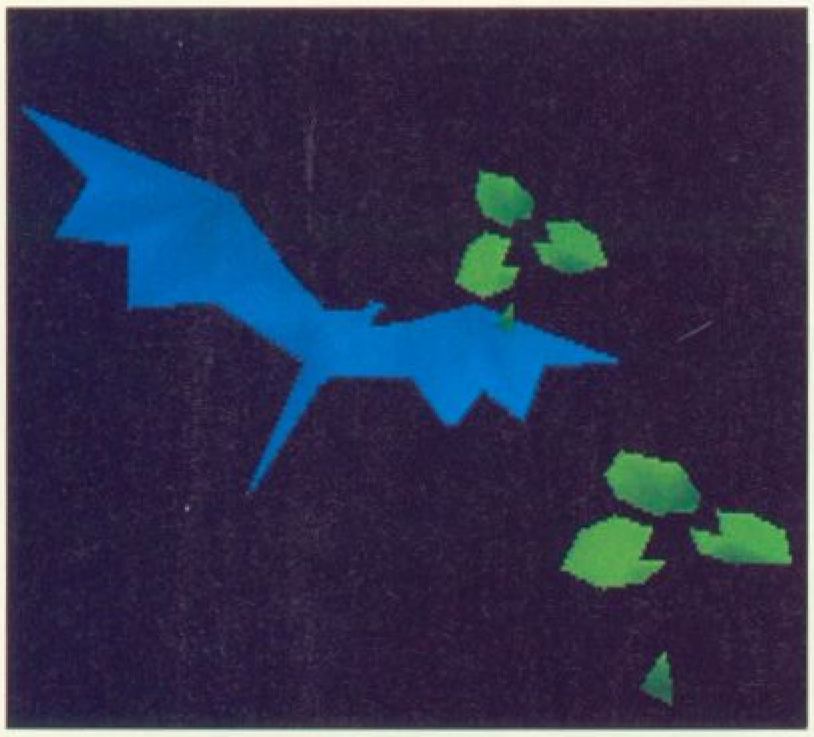
rewards. This exploration angle likens it to Novagen's classic *Mercenary*, as do the elements of weirdness that Jason promises will be cropping up at regular intervals. "Ooh, there are lots of weird things. For example, you've got a [illegible] floating about, and on one of the planets there's a clue about the game's inscr[illegible]

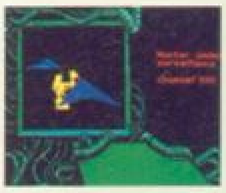
There's also a thing called a Songspinner, which is a giant rock that starts to rotate when you shoot it. As you shoot it more and more times it spins faster and faster until it starts to hum, making a noise like whalesong. This sound attracts a whale, who comes along and gives you a message. There's plenty of aesthetic stuff too, like all the plants have real life-cycles, and you can actually watch them swelling and ripening."

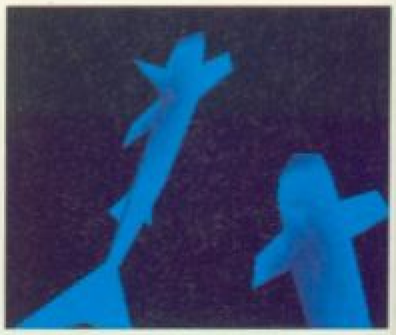
While *Eye of the Storm*'s gameplay is quite surreal and "free-range" in essence, there are some more familiar, linear elements, such as the missions that crop up from time to time. "You've got these people called patrons, who are kind of the interplanetary barons," explains Jason.

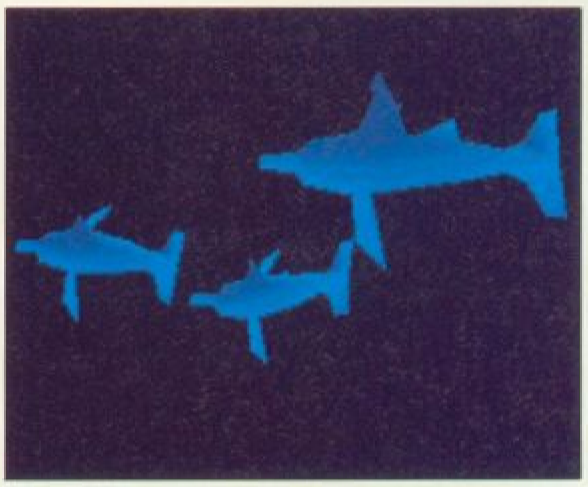
"They're tremendously wealthy, and float around the eye in these giant dirigibles. There are eight patrons, each with different personalities, and each has eight missions to give you." The only problem is, because the patrons are so fabulously rich, they don't actually need anything done and so the only reason they give you missions is so they can have a laugh watching you risk your neck. Serious players may not like to think themselves as throwaway entertainment for galactic fat cats, but the cash bounties on offer for the missions are so large it's often worth taking the risks involved.

To increase their entertainment, the patrons are likely to set the player up with false missions - for example, you could get sent to a certain sector on the pretence of collecting something, only to find a flotilla of enemy ships waiting for







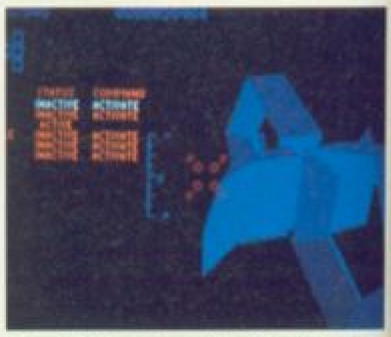


((Above and left) Fish! Some of the bizarre creatures found in the gaseous atmosphere of Mars.

TRADE PRICE DAY TODAY!

Despite Jason's insistence that Eye of the Storm isn't like Elite, there is one aspect about which there can be no dispute - trading. But while it's there, Jason's keen to point out that it's a far cry from the "repetitive" sort that occurred in Elite. "You can trade with either the hunters or the patrons. There are two ways of trading - you either buy something from one person, then sell it to someone else at a profit, or go looking for stuff to salvage for free, and sell that."

"There are five types of rare mineral in the eye that most of the trading is based around, and you can also trade alien artifacts and fish(!). The problem is that the more expensive minerals are protected - one kind, for instance, is protected by the Great Eye of Terror, which paralyses anything it sets its gaze upon. If it looks at you, you're dead in space until it looks away. The same applies for any of the hunters that may come looking. You can also go mineral mining, by blasting away at rocks, some of which contain diamonds."



(Above) This is a stargate. By flying through it, you can go to a different place. You can actually define where your exit port will be, through some seriously complex fiddling.

them. To survive such double-crossing tactics, players must be on their toes at all times.

Talking of enemy ships, they come in the form of Hunters, high-speed fighters that for the most part roam around the eye looking for something to shoot at. Four hunters in particular, however, aren't to be taken so lightly. They're professionals, out in the pursuit of pretty much the same goals as you, but mercilessly ruthless in the way they achieve them.

Because they're so nasty, there's a large cash bounty to be had for killing one, although the more sensible player will want to earn more over a long period by picking up small bonuses for individual dogfights. "One feature that I'm quite pleased with," says Jason, "is that you are able to see exactly what any of the four main hunters is doing using special remote cameras. You can select inset views that basically shows you what the selected hunter is seeing from his craft.

It's useful for keeping tabs on them, particularly if you want to stay out of their way, and if you do get into a fight with one and he goes out of your sight, you can use the view to see what he's up to."

If all this sounds a bit hectic and bloody, players can choose a more sedate way of earning a few bob, as Jason explains. "Because the eye of Jupiter is an uncharted area, there is all kinds of undiscovered wildlife about. You can earn money just by seeing new forms of life, because everything you do is recorded. If you find something for the first time, you get a certain amount of money, but if you see something for the second time, or another hunter has seen it before you, you get less because it's already been discovered." The forms of life are many and varied, including sharks, jellyfish and dragonflies, and the type of life you're likely to find changes as you move up and down through the different levels of the eye's gaseous atmosphere.

In order to preserve that "still playable in six months" quality that he's been searching for, he and programmer AJ Perrott (of *Starglider 2* fame) have endeavoured to make the playing area as large as possible. "In geographical terms, it's somewhere between ten thousand and sixteen thousand miles square. In the game, that translates into, let's see... if you had the fastest ship in the game, travelling at top speed, it would take you around six to eight minutes to travel from your base in the centre of the eye to the very edge. In fact it's impossible to travel that far in one go, because you wouldn't have enough fuel. You'd either have to position special fuel pods along the way, or use one of the special teleport gates."

While Jason has been working on the design of *Eye of the Storm* for over 18 months now ("I've always wanted to do a 3D game", he says), coding has only been in progress for the last ten. Currently he and AJ are trying to figure out what objects in the game will be indestructible. Once that's done, it's down to a marathon session of bug-testing which, for the most part, will consist of sitting back and watching the game to make sure everything behaves exactly as it should. The release date for PC, ST and Amiga versions is set for September - watch out for the full ACE review around that time.

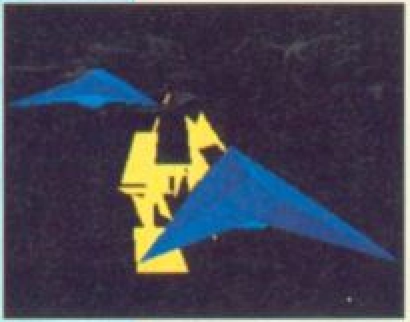
MMMM, FASHINATING!

Eye of the Storm **employs all sorts of clever cutting-edge technical tricks and techniques, the hottest of which is Gourad shading - the new buzzword among hip programming types. So what exactly is it. "Gourad shading is the next step on from light-source shading," Jason explains. "Basically what it does is smooth out the hard edges in polygon shapes using colours. Where you have two polygons meeting along a sharp edge, Gourad uses colour graduation to make the join less sharp.**

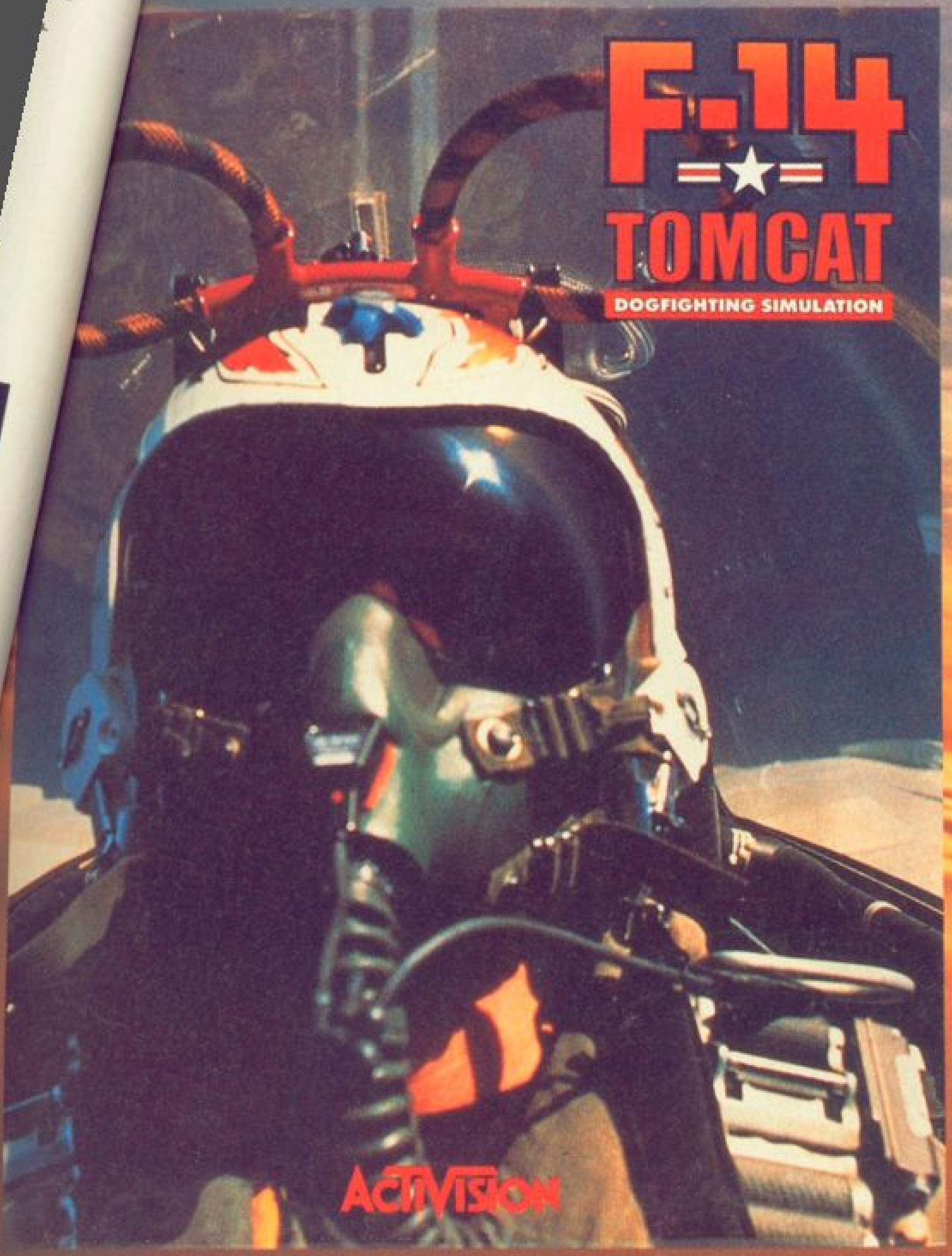
It's a very new technique, and combined with Bezier curved polygons, we've been able to produce some very interesting shapes indeed. We're only using Gourad shading for the organic objects in the game though - all the mechanical objects like spaceships are supposed to have sharp edges after all."

Mmm, fashinating.

(Below) Two spaceships on an action-packed strafing run. You can enter combat scenarios if you wish, or take the cowards way and simply explore and trade.



F-14 TOMCAT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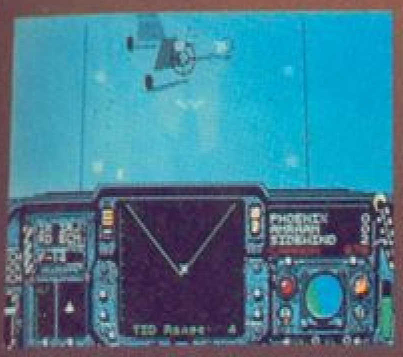
PHOENIX
AMRAAM
SIDEWIND
TID Range 4

PHOENIX
AMRAAM
SIDEWIND
TID Range 24
HIT ON MIG-23! IT.S GOING DOWN!

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ACTIVISION

MEGA

US GOLD hopes that *Mega Twins* will be the *Rainbow Islands* of 1991. ACE visits Manchester-based Tiertex to see how CapCom's cutesy coin-op is converting...

The Eyes have it. Or, to be more precise, the Blue Dragon's Eyes have it. Magical powers, that is. An ancient legend in the Book of Illumination prophesies that should the people of Alurea ever be under threat, the Blue Dragon's Eyes will appear to save them.

But you can't trust fables. One grey day, a monstrous Warlord invaded Alurea and put the King and Queen to the sword. It was only thanks to the courage of loyal courtiers that their twin baby sons escaped death.

Fifteen years passed, and the twins grew hungry for revenge. Strapping on swords and putting their best platform-hopping feet forward, the two teen-warriors set out on a quest though six levels of arcade action to find the Eyes and save their Kingdom from evil's slavery...

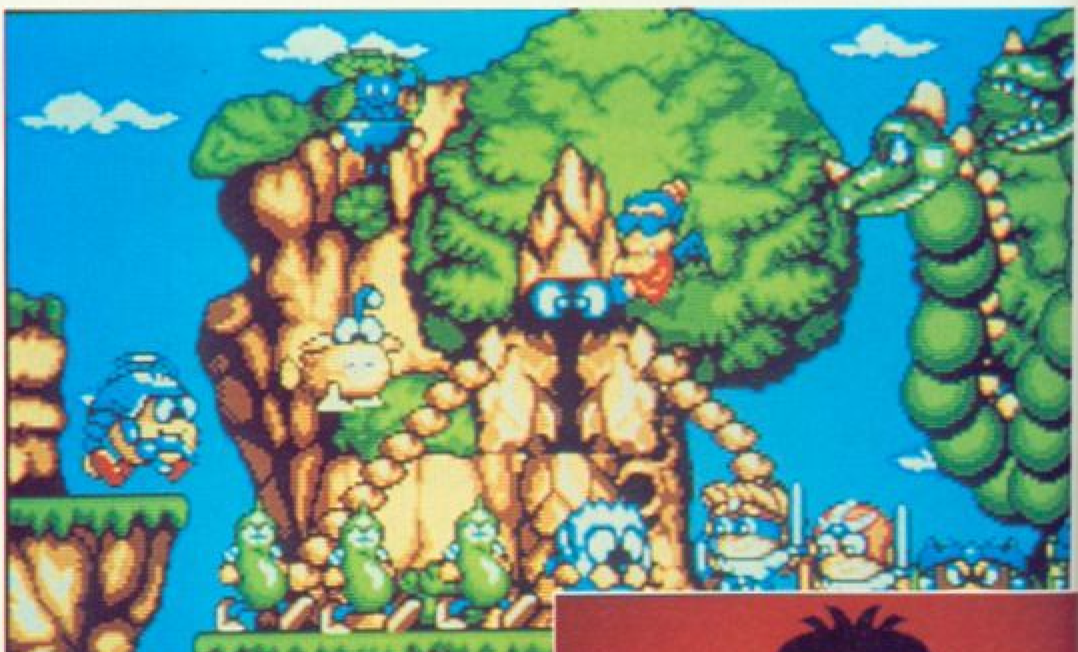
CAPCOM KINGS

Tiertex are no strangers to CapCom conversions, being responsible for the recent *UN Squadron* and *Mercs*. This current project is being programmed by Andy, with Wayne on graphics and John writing the music and sound FX. (For security reasons their surnames must remain Top S ecret!) Work started back in January using the PDS development system, but mid-way though the project Tiertex switched to the newer, more-powerful SNASM system.

What is it that they like about *Mega Twins*? "It's got plenty of colourful sprites, fast action and it's great with two players. The wide range of varied levels keep you interested because you want to see what's next." Indeed. As well as the traditional cross-country monster bashing and platform jumping antics, the Mega Twins have to negotiate underwater caverns and even fly through nasty-infested aerospace at one point (thanks to a magical flying cap!).

Although *Mega Twins* is Andy's first 16-bit arcade conversion (he previously wrote *Defenders of the Earth* on the Spectrum), it looks like the work of a seasoned pro. Many ST scrolling games have drab, repetitive backdrops because they're built from graphic blocks stored in memory in several pre-scrolled positions. This means memory is rapidly eaten up, restricting the number of different graphic blocks that can be stored.

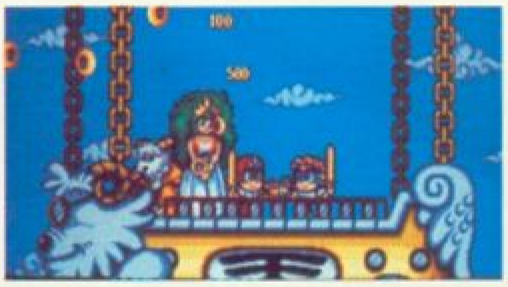
Mega Twins' backgrounds, on the other hand, scroll smoothly and are packed with variety and colour. Very impressive. How did was the effect achieved? Andy doesn't want to give too much away, but states, "The scrolling in *Mega Twins* uses no pre-rotation but takes up a lot of screen

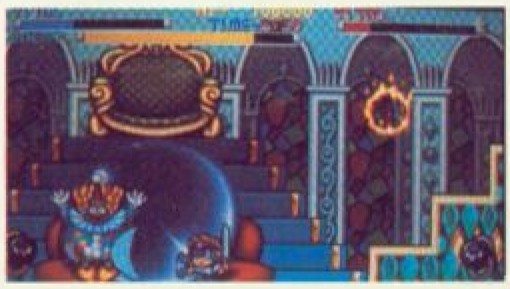


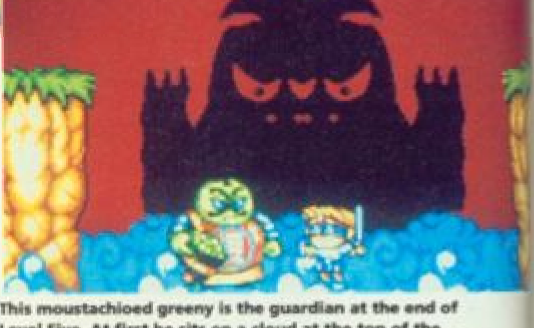
Don't panic! This is one of the intro screens. Normally the action never gets this bad - fortunately! The sprites range from tiny (8 x 8 pixels) to huge (128 x 104 pixels). Many of the larger, more complex meanies are built from several sprites.

COIN-OP COMPARISON

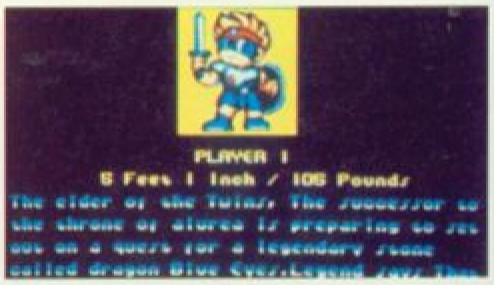
These screenshots are from the original coin-op. Apart from the obvious - and unavoidable - decrease in colour, Tiertex has done a marvellous job of porting the detailed graphics across to the Amiga and Atari ST.



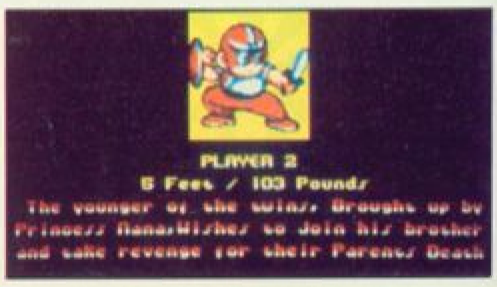




This moustachioed greeny is the guardian at the end of Level Five. At first he sits on a cloud at the top of the screen and sends wave after wave of peanut men to attack you, before jumping down to finish you off himself.



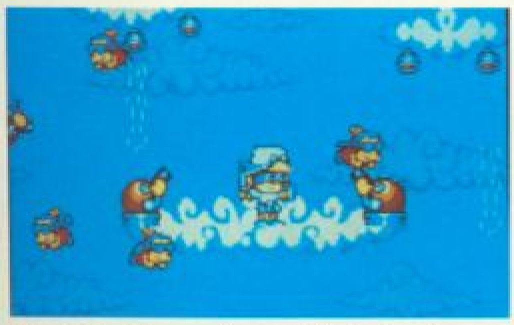
PLAYER 1
5 Feet 1 Inch / 105 Pounds
The elder of the Twins. The successor to
the throne of Alurea is preparing to set
out on a quest for a legendary stone
called Dragon Blue Eyes.Legend says



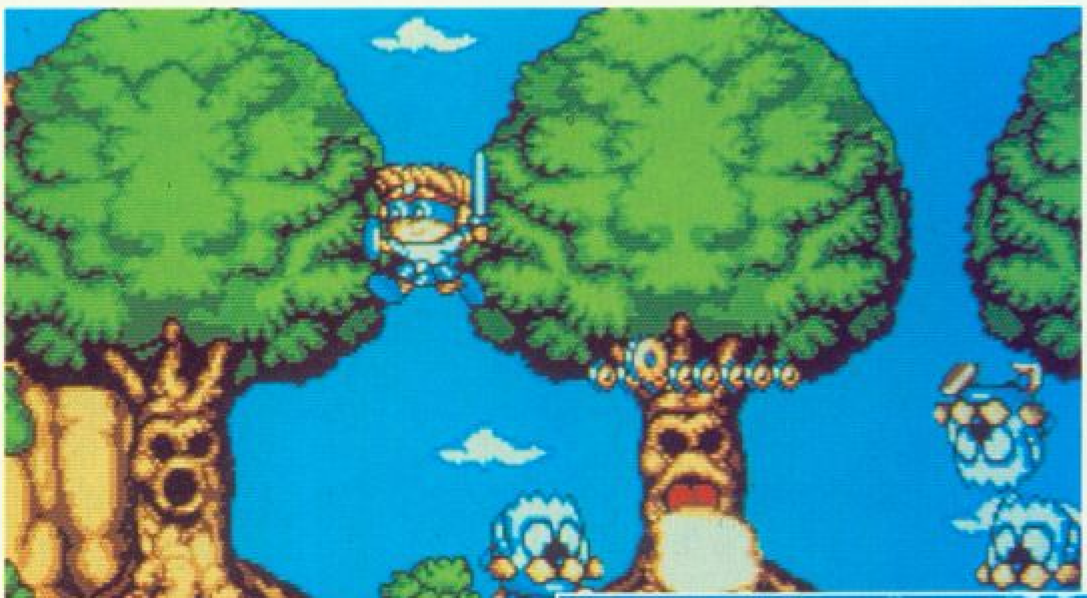
PLAYER 2
5 Feet / 103 Pounds
The younger of the twins. Brought up by
Princess Nana.Wishes to Join his brother
and take revenge for their Parents Death

Can the Twins save the Kingdom? Their fate is in your (and a friend's) hands...

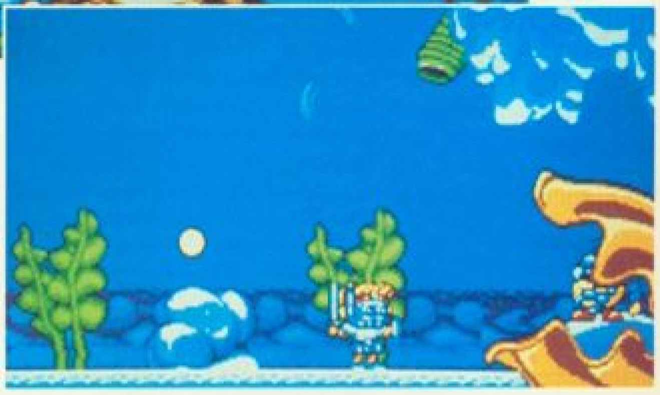
TWINS



(Above) On Level Three you don a special winged cap for some aerial escapades through a cloud-filled sky. Things look a little crowded - perhaps it'd be wise to use a smart-bombish Magic Bomb to clear the air.



(Right) The first level sees you making your way though the woods. Those blue guys may be cute, but they're just a deadly as the ugliest monster. A single jab from your magic sword will see them off.



(Inset right) Don't clam up! This giant shell guards the entrance to some underwater caves. To progress you'll have to slice 'n' dice the cute little Hermit Crab first. Don't get too sentimental - the crab doesn't give a second thought about doing the same to you.

NO COMMODORE COP OUTS

Good as the ST version is looking, Amiga *Mega Twins* promises to be even better! The Amiga's blitter and hardware scrolling capabilities will be fully used for a faster game, and the Amiga's wider palette will also be implemented to give subtler colouring to the graphics. Memory permitting, certain background features - like the giant waterfall - will be animated.

Tiertex toyed with the idea of including the arcade machine's parallax, but eventually decided against it. The reasons are simple: parallax would mean using the Amiga's 'dual-playfield mode', which only allows backgrounds in 8 colours. Tiertex felt the decrease in colour would spoil the look of the game.

memory. It the most difficult bit of the game to write. It's a massive piece of very complex code, and took me a month and a half to develop."

SCREEN TO SCREEN

So how do you go about porting a complex coin-op like *Mega Twins* across to the home machines. Did CapCom help much? "As developers," says Tiertex's spokeswoman, Rachel Farrow, "We don't really have that much contact with them. It's usually US Gold who deal with them. At first, we were given a video of the game being played through, but later we were supplied with the actual arcade ROM board, so we could get the feel of the game correct as well as the graphics."

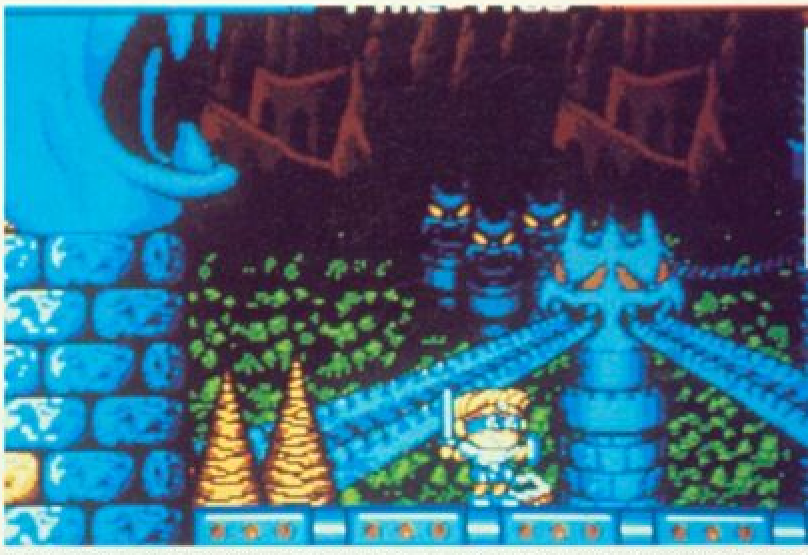
The arcade machine's graphics were digitised straight from the screen, then ported across to an Amiga running *DPaint 3* for re-mapping in 16 colours and general touching up. The backgrounds are split up and stored as 480 16 x 16 pixel blocks. Although the sprites and the backgrounds use the same 16 colours, raster splitting will be used to generate a different colour palette for the score panels.

THE FUTURE?

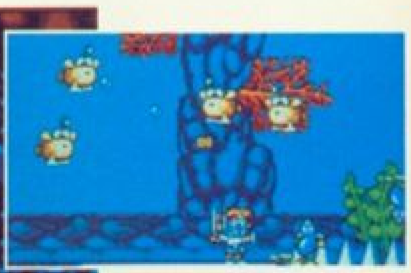
Mega Twins is well on schedule for its August completion date, and should hit the shelves in September. But as arcade machines get more and more complex and become more like funfair rides than games, what do Tiertex think is the future for coin-op conversions? Rachel's answer is unsurprising, "We think the future's very good, though with some arcade machines it's only possible to get a gist of what the original is like because of hardware limitations."

Fortunately *Mega Twins* is the sort of game that doesn't wow 'em in the arcades but converts well to the home machines. And Tiertex is very happy with their work so far; "*Mega Twins* is very faithful to the arcade original, incorporating nearly all of the graphics and playability." But a *Rainbow Islands* for our times? We shall see, readers, we shall see...

● David Upchurch



Carefully does it - you're approaching the end of the sixth and final level, where you finally confront the two-headed dragon. This ST shot is a fine example of the highly-detailed backgrounds. Thanks to Andy's programming there have been no compromises in speed or smoothness to achieve this - the ST game scrolls the backdrops in two pixel increments every two or three frames (depending on how much action there is on screen).



(Above) Some levels see you swimming under water, complete with scuba mask and snorkle. Look out for glowing clams which contain power ups, shields and extra Magic Bombs.

YO!

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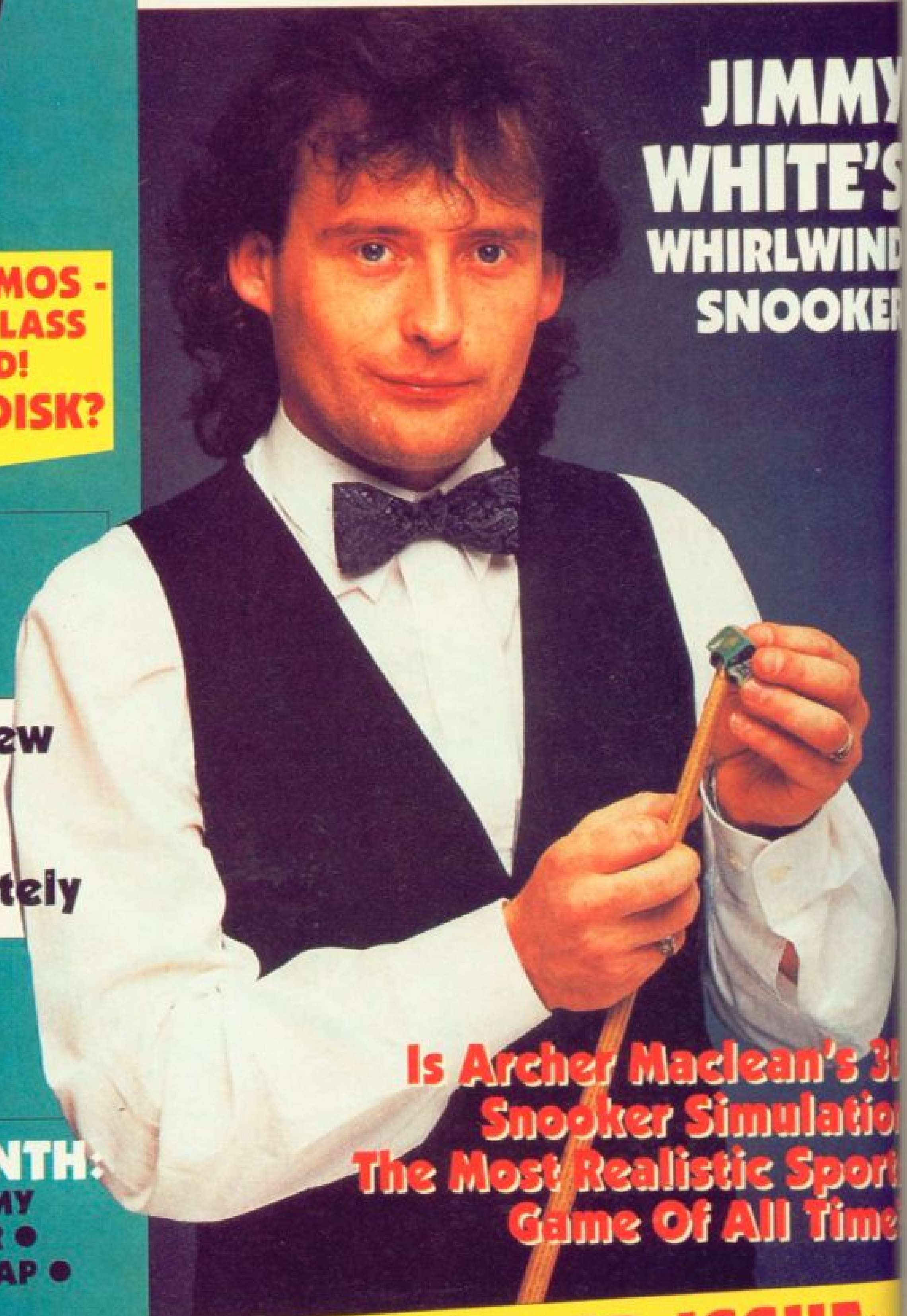

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- SWAP
- THUNDERJAWS

INSIDE THIS PACKED ISSUE:

- INDY IN ATLANTIS - Part Two Of Our Exclusive WIP
- THE ULTIMATE JOYSTICK - What the stars want to see
- REVEALING SECRETS - Of Lucasfilm's Monkey Island
- TAKE TO THE SKIES - With Our F-15 II Player's Guide
- WIN! - A Mountain Bike From Renegade

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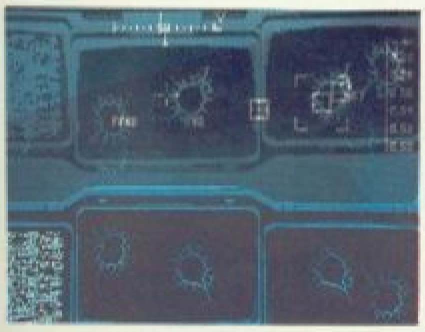
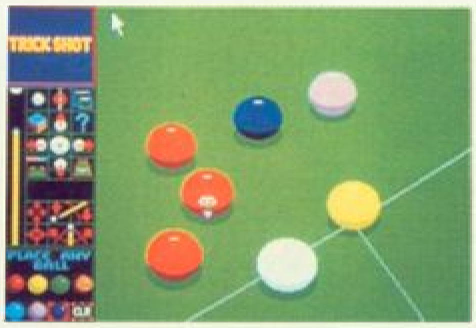
SCREEN TEST



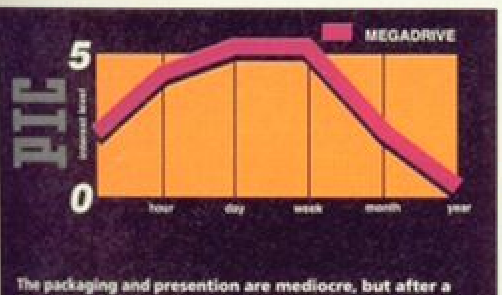
Core Design's *Thunderhawk* promises to lure arcade fans into the polygon flight genre. And by golly, we think they've cracked it. See page 52



Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker from Virgin. Anything but, if you will, a load of balls. See page 58

HIGH FIDELITY

ACE's reviews, you should find, differ from those in other magazines. And frankly we're pleased. It's not an intentionally contrary stance, but we do rather pride ourselves in spotting those niggling little flaws which make games less enjoyable for you. While other titles may well be happy to promise later levels full of excitement, we'll only tell you what we've seen for ourselves. Hopefully, the result is an altogether more coherent, reliable and believable read.



The packaging and presention are mediocre, but after a few minutes the depth of gameplay really bites. Unfortunately a repetitive challenge means it's downhill from there on...

The PIC – *Predicted Interest Curve* – is the most sophisticated reviewing tool around.

The curve is divided into six sections, indicating the player's adrenalin level after one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, and one year. And this can tell you a lot more about a game than just the interest levels...

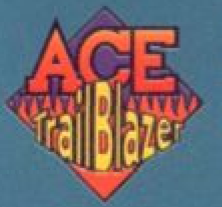
The minute, hour, and day ratings can tell you a lot too. If there's a dip here, followed by a rise, you've got a game that may take a bit of getting into. Alternatively, the graphics may put you off for a while until the gameplay starts to grip. Check out the PIC comment for more details.

● Lots of cutesy characters ● Fascinating 3D sections. ● The two player link-up option for stage 16	● Twelve disks to swap! ● No colour on some stages ● No joystick or mouse control option

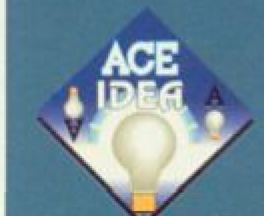
We won't rate a game unless it represents what you'll find on the shelves. If a game's not finished, we won't rate it. Instead we give it an ACE Preplay verdict panel that tells you how we think it's shaping up. In most cases, a full review of the finished game will follow in a later issue.

ACE AWARDS

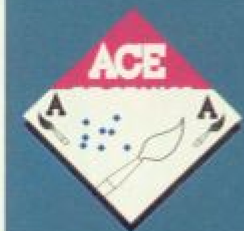
ACE always awards seals of approval for outstanding software performance. If a game really breaks the boundaries in sound, graphics, or originality you'll see the appropriate ACE Award flash on the review. Unless it's truly dire – in which case it'll get the ACE Turkey award. Software houses: you have been warned!



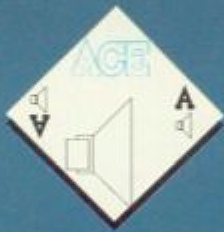
ACE only awards this one to games of outstanding quality. A 900+ game is a classic title, recommended without hesitation.



Originality counts for a lot these days, and any games that have it deserve a special mention. This ACE award is reserved specifically for these rare games.



One of the first things to grab you in a game is its graphics. Games that redefine the state-of-the-art get this seal of approval from ACE.



Sound is the 'forgotten' aspect of games – but can make or break them. ACE only awards this one to brilliant use of audio in a game.

THE LINE UP

Computer and Console *pages 52-78*

52 **THUNDERHAWK** *Core Design*
56 **CASTLES** *Electronic Arts*
58 **WHIRLWIND SNOOKER** *Virgin*
50 **CENTURION** *Electronic Arts*
51 **ALIEN STORM** *Megadrive*
62 **MAUPITI ISLAND** *Lankhor*
64 **SLIDERS** *Palace*
67 **BEAST BUSTERS** *Activision*
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69 **WILD WHEELS** *Ocean*
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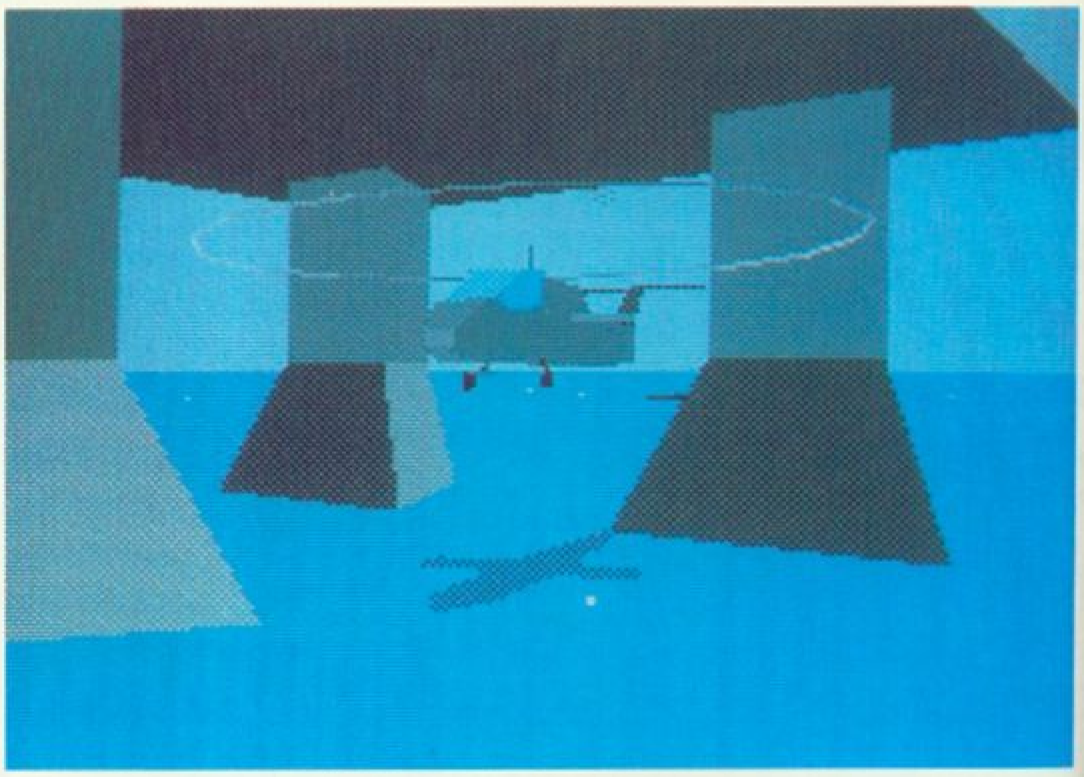
76 **CHOPLIFTER** *Game Boy*
77 **HATRIS** *Game Boy*



Just in time to catch the combat-sim-without-the-sim wave before it becomes a cliché, CORE DESIGN proudly present their whirlybird actioner

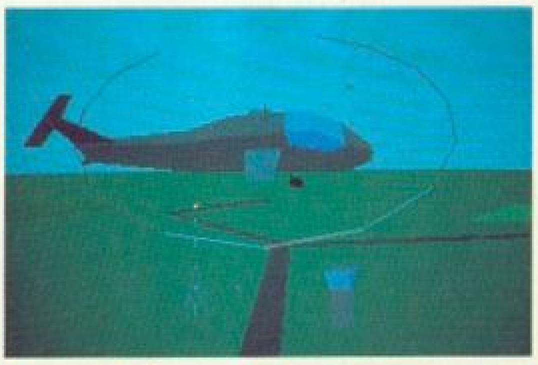
THUNDER

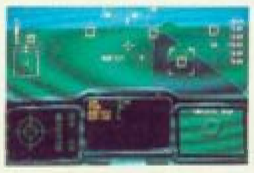
They're sick of boring flight sims, are Core. And they feel that the buying public are the same. So *Thunderhawk*'s mission is to fly straight into the metaphorical, if you will, 'kill zone' of gameplay without all that pre-flight nonsense that everyone finds such a drag. And while it's wrong to assume that there's some worldwide backlash against detail, it's true that the statistic brigade have already been more than admirably catered for. And so, while Microprose *et al* deal out the heavyweight sims, Core are endeavouring to pull that lucrative pool of arcade fans into the genre more gently. Well, that's the plan.

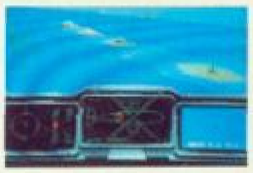
And it appears to have worked extremely well. There is, of course, a great difference between depth and unnecessary complexity. Stripped of virtually all irritating drawbacks *Thunderhawk* scores action-packed hits in all areas. For a start, everything is controlled through the mouse. Everything from weapons selection through helicopter control to target tracking. Only when flicking through the external-camera views of the action need the player's fingers ever encounter the keyboard.

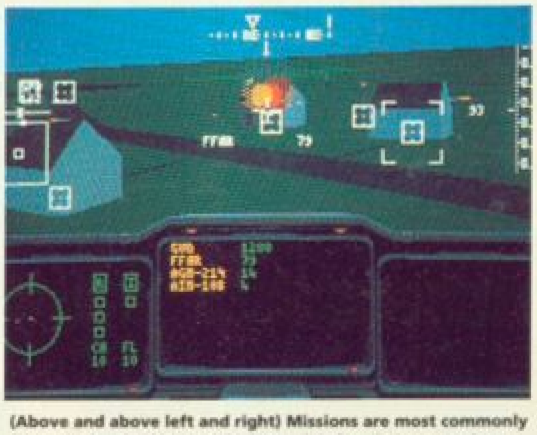
Far from being a nightmare memory-test of clicks and non-clicks, the system holds up extremely well, making it tricky for all but the most dismal pilot to perform all those hilarious flying into the ground stunts when they were simply trying to select their next target.

The game is broken down into a series of campaigns, each featuring the hybrid chopper





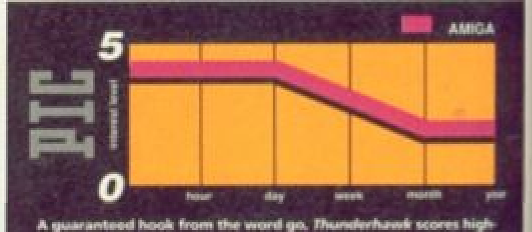




(Above and above left and right) Missions are most commonly flown under the cover of darkness, but buzzing targets in an azure blue ocean is a worthwhile visual treat.

(Top) The precision and ergonomic excellence of the flight controls allow for some dead tricky flying. Witness a relative novice pilot's nutmeg-the-oil-rig display. Packed with lovely touches, *Thunderhawk* is a joy to behold.

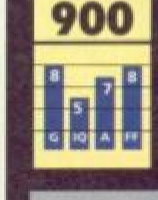
(Left) External views of the helicopter are useful for working out exactly where your targets are, especially when they're immediately below you. It's also so easy to hover the chopper, that even when cycling around with the mobile camera, the player can be confident that no ground-related harm will come to him.



A guaranteed hook from the word go, *Thunderhawk* scores highly. Admittedly it may not offer the extreme long-term appeal that some heavyweight sims offer, but its ease of use more than compensates, and Core stand a good chance of scooping the arcade fans they're after. With the potential for extra mission disks looking decidedly real, the PIC may be boosted further.

ACE RATING

900



AMIGA

No disks to swap, slick presentation and carefully considered missions help Thunderhawk score right up with the best of Amiga action sims. Graphically it couldn't be much better, with the alternative camera angles and tweaks such as the static 'snow' and weapons selections modes adding a thorough and polished feel.

RELEASE DETAILS

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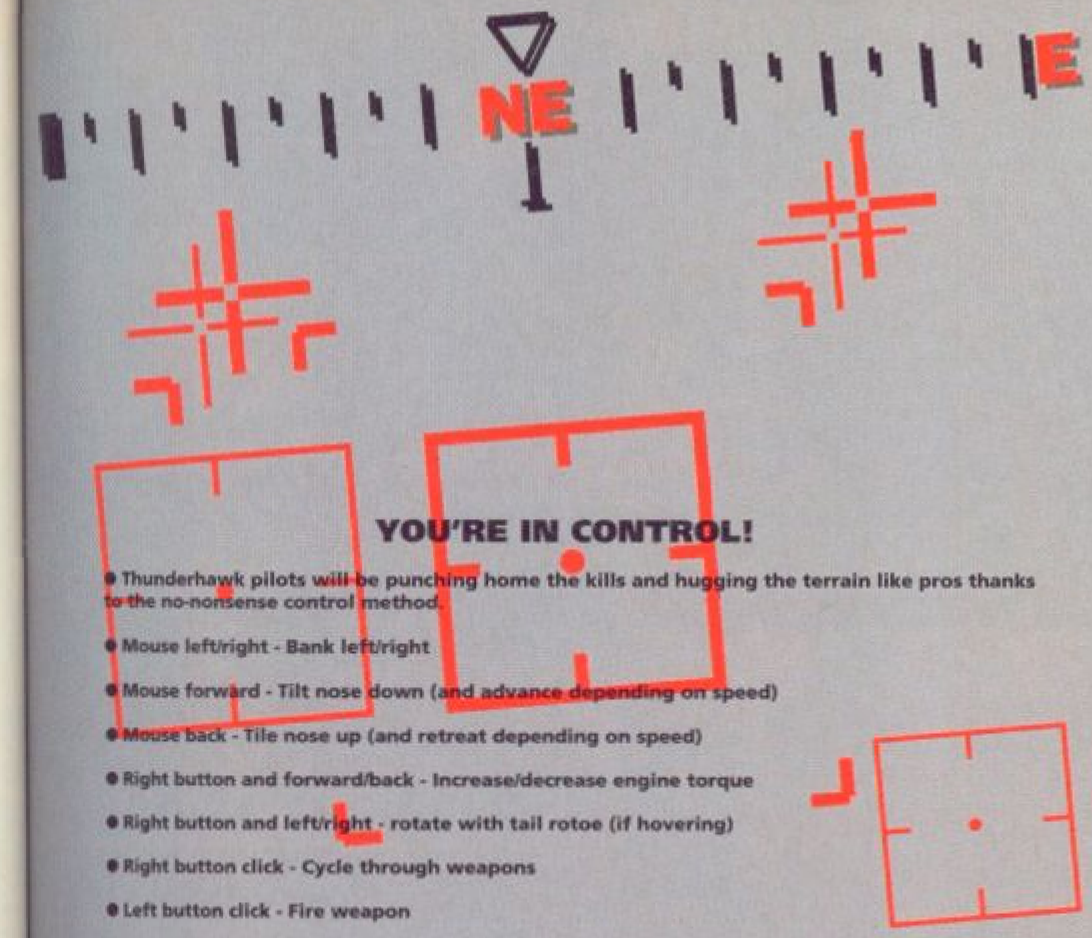
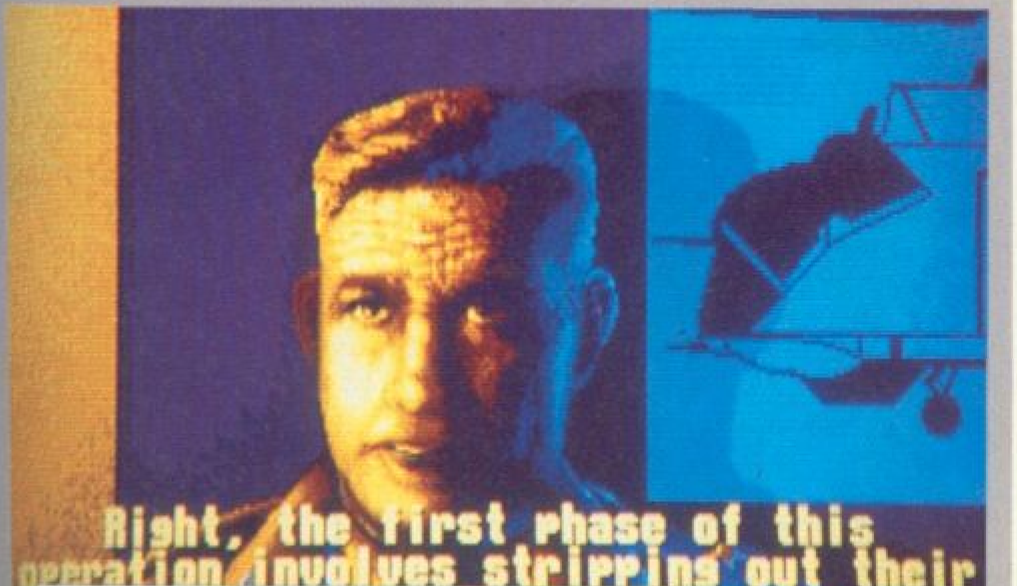
IBM PC	£34.99	IMMINENT

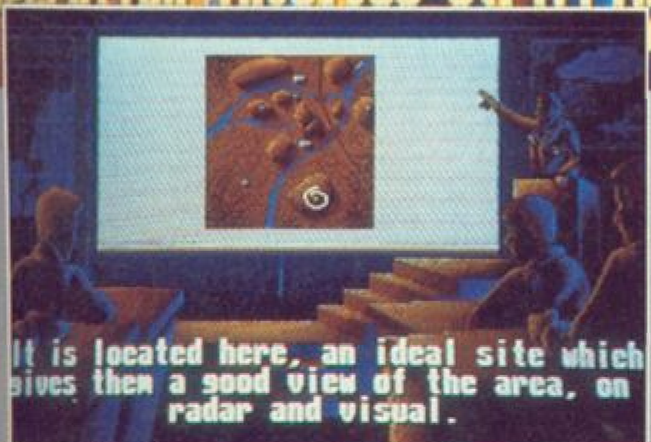


YOU'RE IN CONTROL!

- Thunderhawk pilots will be punching home the kills and hugging the terrain like pros thanks to the no-nonsense control method.
- Mouse left/right - Bank left/right
- Mouse forward - Tilt nose down (and advance depending on speed)
- Mouse back - Tile nose up (and retreat depending on speed)
- Right button and forward/back - Increase/decrease engine torque
- Right button and left/right - rotate with tail rotoe (if hovering)
- Right button click - Cycle through weapons
- Left button click - Fire weapon

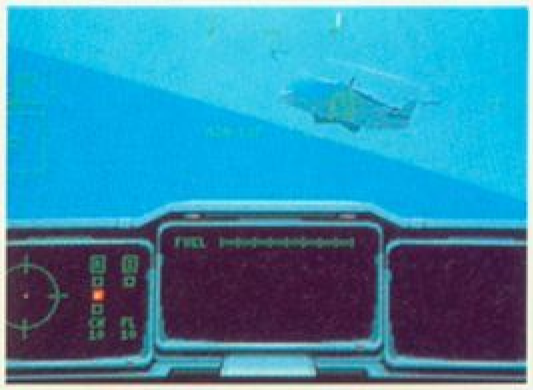
HAWK

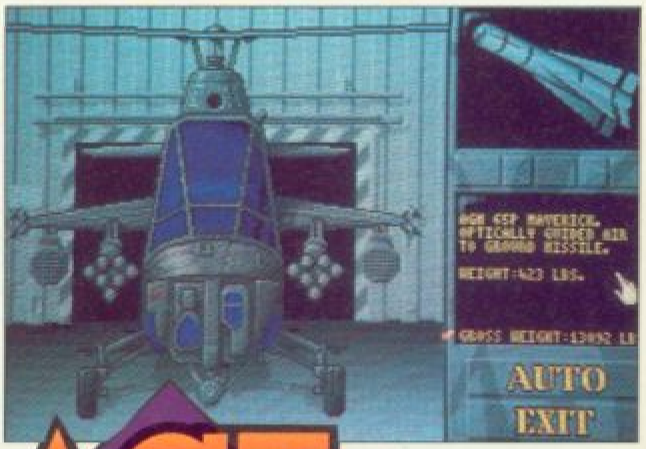

Right, the first phase of this operation involves stripping out their ...ork.


It is located here, an ideal site which gives them a good view of the area, on radar and visual.

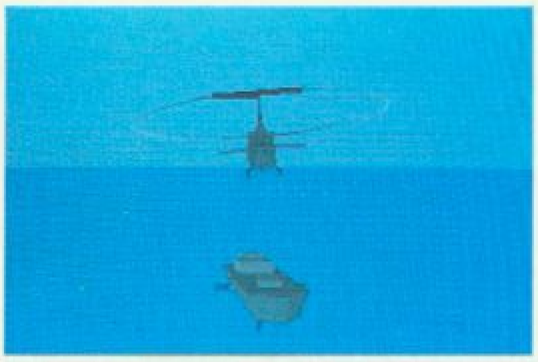
(Above) Jack, your mysterious and enigmatic controller will brief and debrief you. Wise pilots will heed his copious warnings about anti-aircraft defences, tank manoeuvres, airspace activity and other enemy comings and goings.

(Left) In the Head Quarters' operations theatre, satellite reconaissance film of the next mission's targets are shown in atmosphere-setting style, complete with flicker on the black-and-white film images.




AGM 65F MAVERICK. OPTICALLY GUIDED AIR TO GROUND MISSILE.
WEIGHT:423 LBS.
GROSS WEIGHT:13092 LB

ACE TrailBlazer


Water-borne targets boast heavy air-defences, which prove to be tougher than any anti-aircraft fire. They come in fast and won't let up until either they - or you - are done for.

gunship in a pivotal role, working at the enemy defences allowing ground troops to do their work. In the first campaign, for example, a defecting Soviet physicist must be assured safe passage from deep behind enemy lines. The campaigns are further sectionalised into objectives. In the safety of his headquarters, the mysterious allied controller Jack will talk you through your next mission, highlighting key targets which should be destroyed to ensure success.

Before taking to the skies, the pilot of the chopper must select the most appropriate arsenal for the mission. An automatic default will select a decent selections of usable tools for the job, but self-confident flyboys can stock up on flashier kit to suit their personal preferences.

☞

Essentially, the player is continually presented with a list of targets to destroy, some information on the defences in the area and the benefits of a successful mission. Depending on whether you're feeling like a top-dog killing machine or simply want to get the job over and done with, you can elect to try and clean the entire combat zone or hit only your specified targets before escaping. The rule of thumb is that by working a bit harder on each mission, destroying as many ground troops and defences as possible, your forces will be in for an easier time on the next mission.

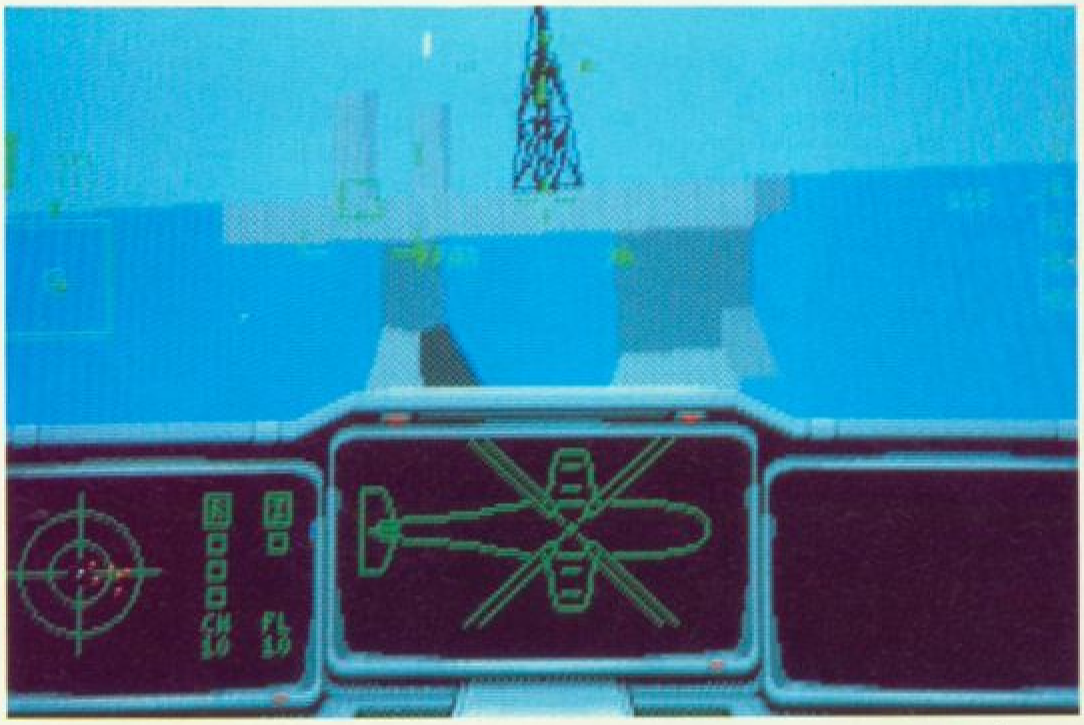
Even in the most ferocious fire-fights, the handling of the helicopter works intuitively. Some serious thought has gone into the control method, making it probably one of the friendliest and most flexible user interfaces around. (See the 'You're In Control!' panel)

That the game packs more combat into five minutes than many manage to muster up in half an hour while still maintaining a degree of realism and purpose can only be a testament to Core's design ability.

The sectionalisation of the game works particularly well; providing short, punchy game sequences, and since flying through dead air space is kept to an absolute minimum (having completed your main objective, turning tail and heading for home will trigger an automatic back-to-base situation) *Thunderhawk* plays like a set of good short stories. Not so much a Tom Clancy, more an Action Man novella.

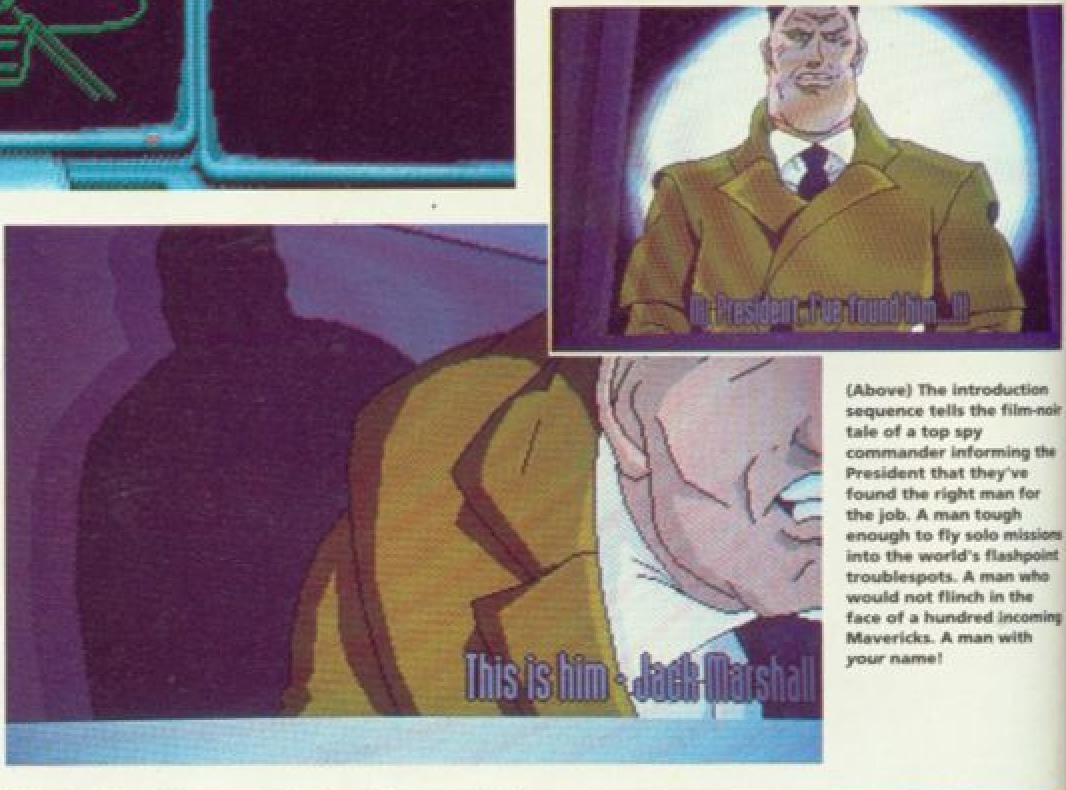
Presentation and ergonomics are excellent throughout, and all the words about thought being put into how the game is played, working from the user back, putting the fun back into flight games which sounded so hear-it-all-before a couple of months ago have been proved to be justified.

● Jim Douglas



(Above) Realistic objects shift with impressive speed, and refreshingly little fuss. Core claim their routines are the fastest around, and we find ourselves in no position to argue.

(Right) The personalized intro names the player as the roughest most toughest s.o.b. who every flew a whirlybird.

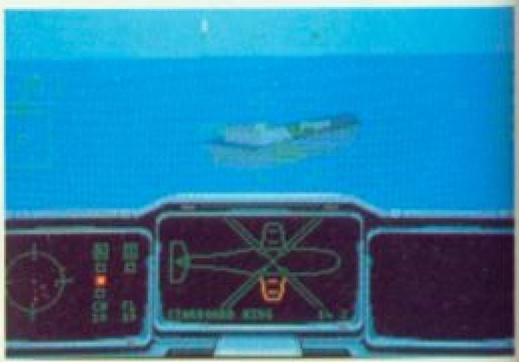

Mr President - I've found him...!!
This is him - Jack Marshall

(Above) The introduction sequence tells the film-noir tale of a top spy commander informing the President that they've found the right man for the job. A man tough enough to fly solo missions into the world's flashpoint troublespots. A man who would not flinch in the face of a hundred incoming Mavericks. A man with *your* name!

VIEW TO A KILL

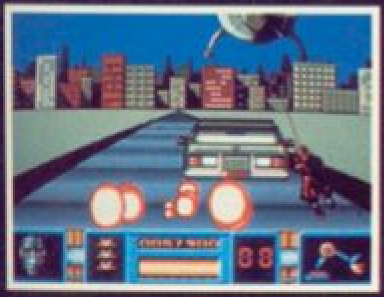
Aside from external helicopter views (you can view your chopper from a fixed distance at any elevation) and the zoom in/out, the player can opt to view the action from either an in-weapon camera or from the p.o.v. of the currently selected target.

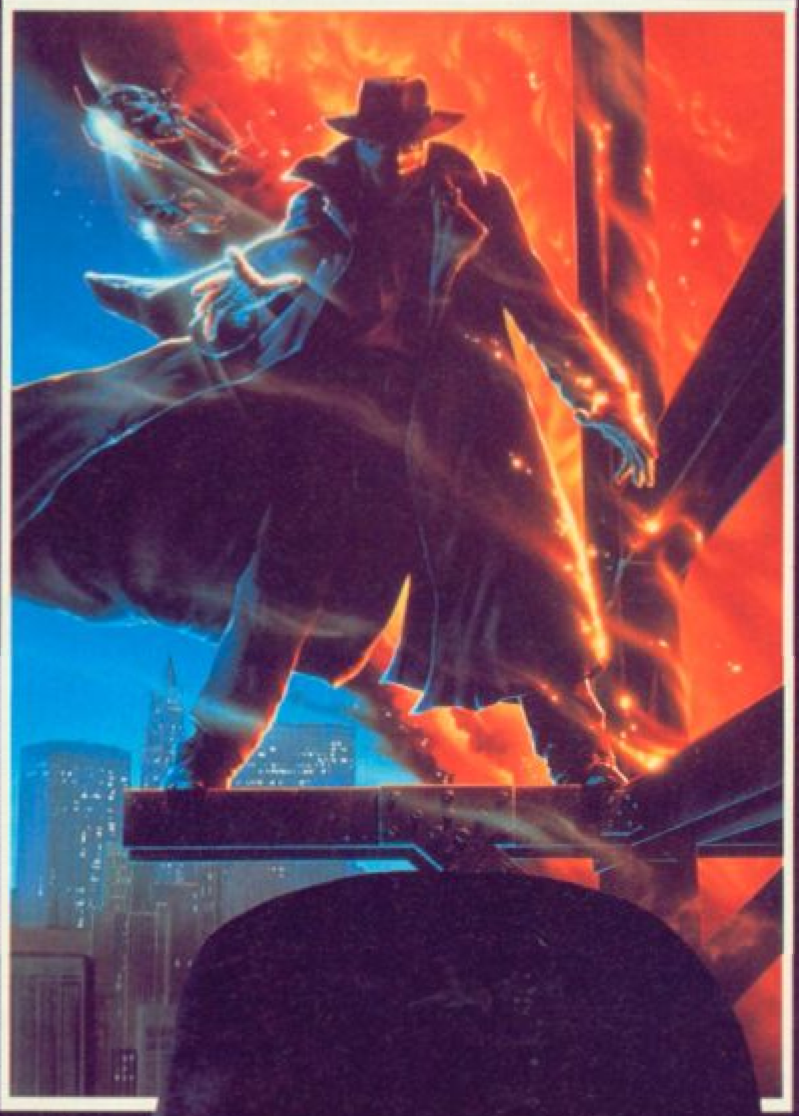
The former provides most exhilarating footage, as the intended target rushes into view and explodes, while the latter results in some especially dramatic shots at night, with your own helicopter's tracer rounds screaming in at the target before the screen turns to static snow.

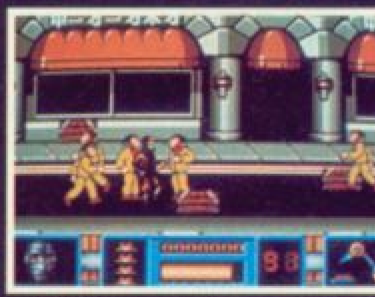


Destroying targets with inappropriate weapons can be strangely satisfying, whether it's dropping an unnecessarily large explosive charge on a residential house or by taking on a tank with a machine gun. Real *Wings of the Apache* stuff.

DARKMAN







THEY DESTROYED EVERYTHING HE HAD
ALL THAT HE LOVED
EVERYTHING THAT HE WAS

NOW CRIME HAS A NEW ENEMY
AND JUSTICE HAS A BRAND NEW FACE

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OCEAN SOFTWARE LIMITED . 6 CENTRAL STREET . MANCHESTER M2 5NS . TEL: 061 832 6633 . FAX: 061 834 0650

CASTLES

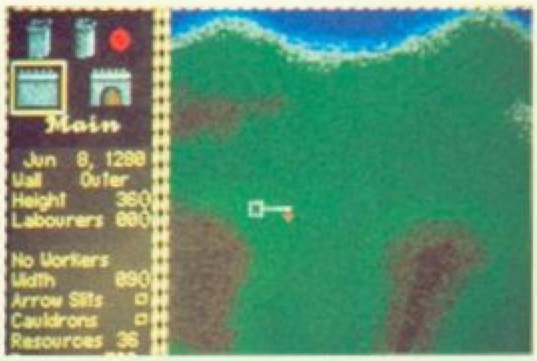
INTERPLAY/EA grant you planning permission for a mediaeval det'd. des. res. complete w/outstanding country views, 25 beds, 4 rcptns, + oubliette...

Castles takes several existing gameplay genres and combines them with a healthy dollop of historical authenticity to provide a game packed with punch, promise, and pitfalls in roughly equal portions. The punch and the promise give the game a very high initial impact - leading you to believe that it is every bit as good as other magazines have cracked it up to be.

After about five hours play, however, distinct reservations emerge, and after ten to fifteen hours you're as acutely aware of the program's deficiencies as you are of its good points. Let's not be too harsh here: *Castles* IS a very nice original package and a serious contender for your cash, but the hype has rather overlooked the weaknesses. Here's the run-down, so you can make up your mind for yourself.

There are three game scenarios, involving the construction of one, three, or eight castles as part of your efforts to subdue the Welsh chieftains. Using reference material provided (and your own imagination) you design your own castle and then hire labour to build it, along with military (soldiers and archers) to defend it.

Your castle consists of walls connected by towers (square or round) and broken by gateways. There are seven classes of labourer and the bulk of the gameplay consists of optimising your labour mix and its application to each element of your site. This is a complex business if you want to do it well, because (a) the requirements of, say, a wall will vary during construction (more diggers required during the early stages, for example) and (b) the game does not tell you how many of each labour class are assigned to an element.

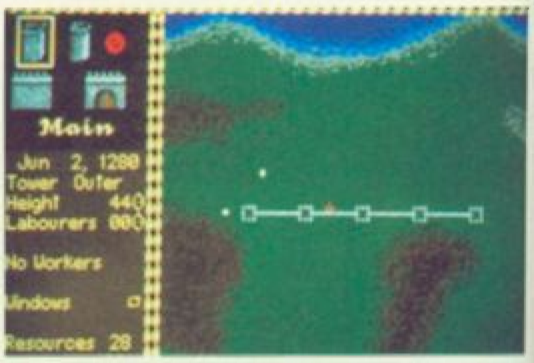


First, design your castle, placing construction elements on the map. Take care to select suitable terrain - don't, for example, put a heavy tower on top of a marsh! If you make a mistake you can use the erase tool to remove elements (but don't waste time building anything you're not 100% sure of).

During construction, your site will come under attack. You are warned of an attack either immediately the enemy is sighted or sometimes by a messenger screen reporting movements of enemy forces. Although some attempt is made to generate excitement through reports of major offensives, in practise the opposition starts weak and climbs a steady curve, pitching its strongest force at you at the end. For this reason, and since there is minimal strategy involved, defeating the opposition is a lot easier than it ought to be.

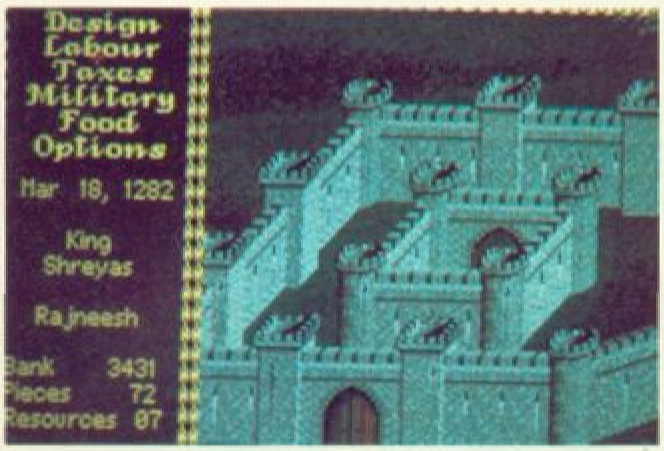
THORNY DILEMMAS

There's also a *Dictator*-style side to the game, which complicates what would otherwise be a pretty simple challenge. First, you must balance your finances, which are based on taxation, and avoid bankruptcy. The latter can lose you the game (at least in the single castle scenario), since your soldiers desert and the enemy can then, in the early stages, completely destroy your site.

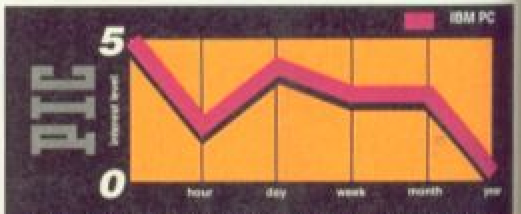


Your castle is now in the early stages of construction. Right now, we've got teams working on the north wall. Towers take longest to build and should be tackled first, so that they can give support to the walls alongside. Walls may collapse if adjacent elements are not tall enough to support them.

As well as manipulating public opinion via taxes, you must also respond in a multiple choice manner to dilemmas presented to you by messengers. These dilemmas demand that you take action or pass judgement in disputes involving either the nobles or the Church. The choices tend to fall into the same pattern: either you please no-one with a compromise or you please one of the two parties and anger the other. Stick



The MAIN viewpoint shows the current castle in isometric 3D format. It's useful for getting a close-up view of work in progress, particularly for seeing which elements are using up scaffolding (the availability of which can be a limiting factor during construction)



Despite joystick and keyboard options, this game really cries out for mouse control. It also cries out for 1.5 megs of hard disk spac - a lot more modest than some of the 8-meg monsters we've become accustomed to. The game supports CGA up to 256-colour VGA, AdLib, Roland, and Soundblaster. Gameplay on anything less than a 286 is agonisingly slow and a fast machine is recommended, particularly for the eight castle campaign.

ACE RATING

795

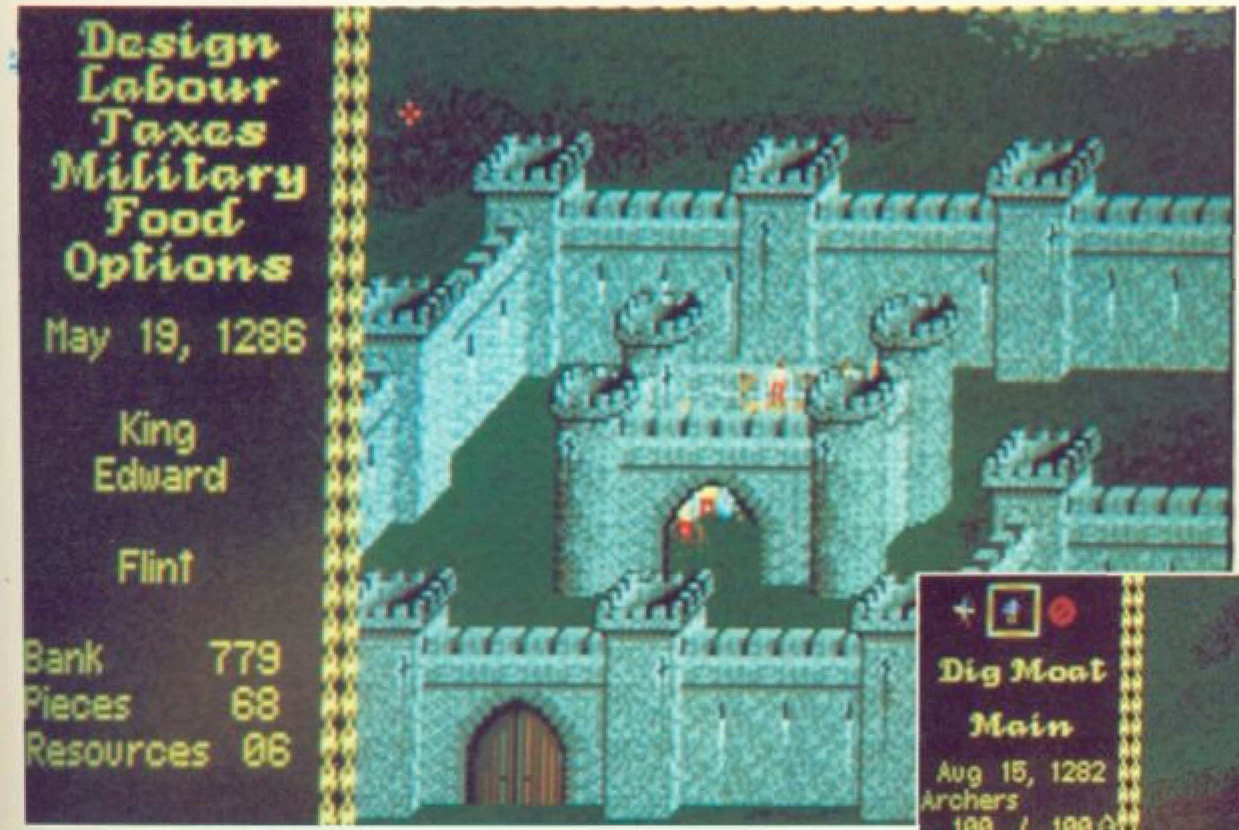
G	IQ	A	FF
8	6	7	7

IBM PC

High initial expectation due to the originality of the scenario is rapidly dampened by muddled documentation. Once you've worked out the ropes, the gameplay builds up...until the weak points begin to eat away the foundations. Good enough, however, to keep you going until you've cracked it...

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.99	OCTOBER
ATARI ST	Under Consideration	
IBM PC	£34.99	OUT NOW



May 19, 1286

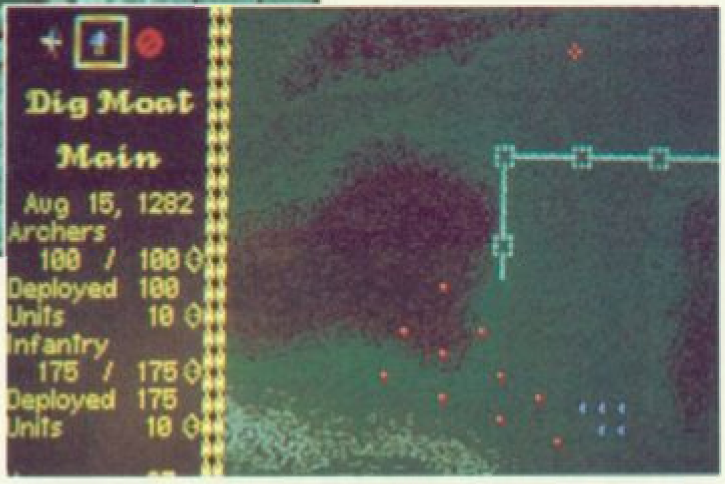
King
Edward

Flint

Bank 779
Pieces 68
Resources 06

(Main Pic Left) Yay! We've nearly finished this castle. At this stage, you can expect a large attack by the natives before receiving a final congratulatory screen, which assesses your reign and reports on your standing with the various social factions.

(Inset Below) Help! We're under attack. Your labour teams have evacuated the site and the program gives you a chance to place military units in position before the enemy arrives. Once the opposition is in range, your infantry units will move towards them and fight, while you direct individual units towards individual targets. Archers remain where they were positioned, so careful placing is essential to mop up any survivors after the infantry assault. If the enemy breaks through, they will attempt to destroy your castle and – if you're in the early stages of building – they may well send you right back to stage one.



Aug 15, 1282
Archers
100 / 100
Deployed 100
Units 10
Infantry
175 / 175
Deployed 175
Units 10

to the latter and you can't go far wrong.

All this is presented using straightforward text information screens, usually with some static illustration, or by one of two views of your site - see the screenshots for details - showing your workers scurrying ant-like about their business.

COUNTING THE NIGGLES

All this makes for very absorbing gameplay - for a while. So what goes wrong? First, the documentation is very poor to the point where parts of the game are almost unplayable without some unsupported lateral thinking. For example, you can actually redirect labour crews on existing site elements using the DESIGN option, which gives you an overhead view of the site. This is necessary because, using the isometric view, it is sometimes impossible - or at least extremely difficult - to click on areas obscured by others that stand in front of them. The program provides a flip viewpoint function to facilitate this but it doesn't always help.

The documentation also fails to support the interesting aspects of castle construction as implemented in the program. For example, the code is obviously allocating different labour classes to different elements at different times, but neither the program nor the documentation updates you on this score. More on-screen information about what's going on would have made a big difference.

In later stages of castle building, you have no way of telling the difference between an almost-finished section on which work has stopped for some reason and a finished one, other than by clicking on it with the mouse for a labour report. It would be nice, particularly when you've just restored a SAVEd game, to have all the elements reported on in either a different screen format (e.g. a Master Mason's report) or, even better, on-screen with arrows and boxes reporting on each element.

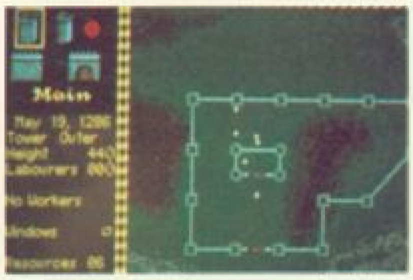
There are numerous other niggles, ranging from the fact that even the Treasury can't give you a total expense sum for your current commitments (you have to add it up yourself), through a failure to indicate which current site element is selected (useful when you have two wall sections side by side in an identical state of construction), to the program's annoying habit of interrupting you at any time - even in mid-adjustment of labour values, for example - with another messenger or announcement.

These problems – and others like them – are particularly frustrating because there's not technical reason why they couldn't have been solved before release. Take the interruption problem above, for example: far better would have been a flashing trumpet or scout icon on the screen, which you could click on as soon as you'd finished your current task, invoking the messenger screen - or suffer the consequences of ignoring it. A similar design failure means you have to be careful to pause the game whenever you leave the terminal, even for short periods. If you forget, messages (which do not wait for an ENTER key to scroll off screen) will have come and gone, leaving you with a screen of multiple choice options and no idea what's going on.

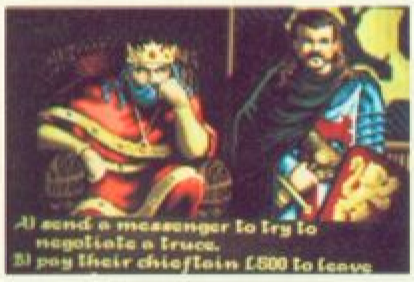
When you finish a game, you get a very brief analysis of your career - far too brief, in fact. It would be nice to have had some form of performance analysis on your labour allocations, for example. As it is, you feel a bit let-down after spending so long constructing, conciliating, and kicking ass.

On the positive side, *Castles* is genuinely different. You get a feeling of authenticity and a task that constantly requires attention, spiced with numerous little added dilemmas. On the minus side, anyone with a decent brain is going to find the one and three castle campaigns rather easy (the eight castle campaign is as much one of added patience as it is one of added skill). In the end, the absorbing gameplay is slowly eroded by niggling shortcomings and the frustrating feeling that just a few extra ounces of game design would have resulted in a real heavyweight title.

● **Steve Cooke**

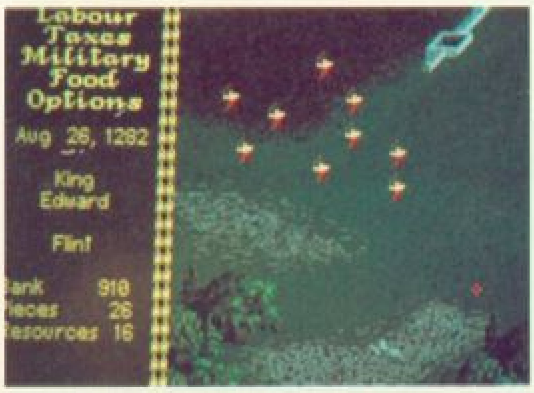


The DESIGN screen shows you an overhead view of the site and can also be used later in the game to direct labour teams without having to scroll around using the large scale isometric view



A) send a messenger to try to negotiate a truce.
B) pay their chieftain £500 to leave

Every so often you'll be 'visited' be a messenger. The news (either good or bad) is then followed by a multiple-choice response



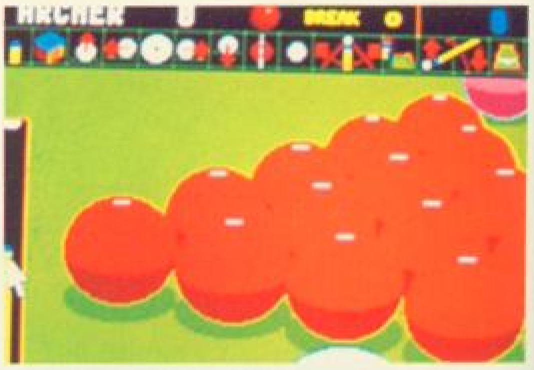
Aug 26, 1282

King
Edward

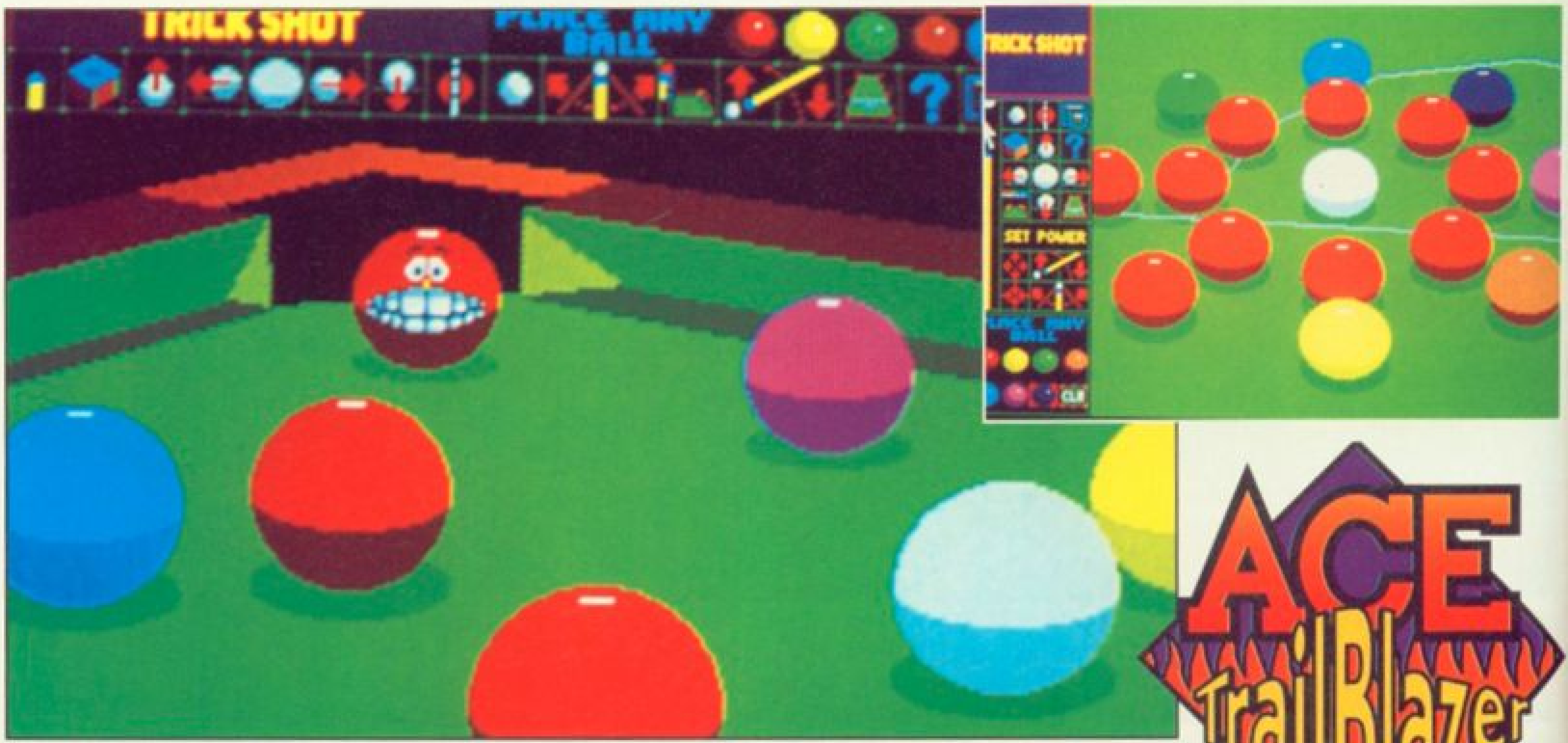
Flint

Bank 910
Pieces 26
Resources 16

You can also view combat in the MAIN mode – more attractive, but rather more difficult to control your troops



(Right) No two break-offs are ever the same, because the pack of reds is assembled with minute differences in the gaps between balls each time - as this close-up shows. Thus, as in the real thing, you can never be quite sure how a break is going to go until you've played it.



(Below Right Inset) Whether you want to impress your mates or just get in a bit of practice, the Trick Shot Editor is for you. Here, you can set up any shot you like, placing balls anywhere. Shot set-ups can be saved out to disk so you can relive those show-off moments time and time again.

ACE TrailBlazer

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND

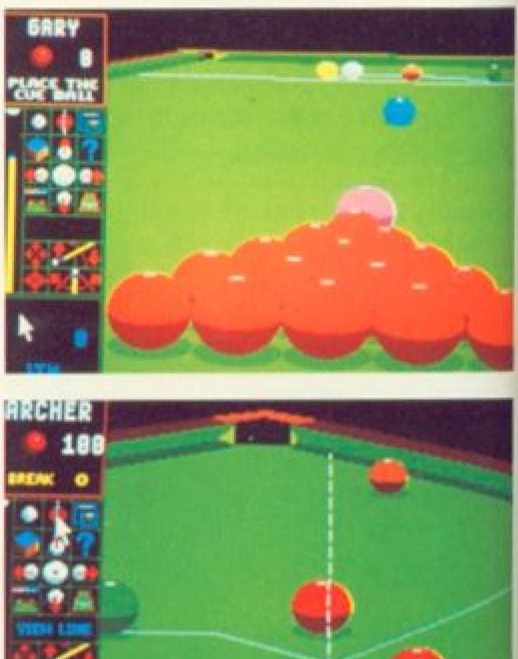
Snooker loopy nuts are we... and it's all thanks to VIRGIN and Archer Maclean.

And it's hardly surprising, given the quality of the latest game from veteran programmer Archer Maclean. From the violent excesses of the brilliant *Dropzone*, *International Karate* and its even harder sequel *IK+* to the hushed atmosphere of the matchroom and the famous green baize? Hardly a predictable move, but the end result is, nevertheless, a winner - and Archer's most remarkable game to date.

Cue games have of course been around as long as people have been able to program - plot a few coloured shapes, bung in a few angle-of-deflection algorithms and away you go. Even the idea of taking the genre into the third dimension is nothing new, thanks to Nick Pelling's *3D Pool* of two years ago. One vital feature that's been missing from all these past efforts, however, is any element of realism. No game has ever recreated what it's really like to play Snooker. Until now.

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker uses an approach similar to the aforementioned *3D Pool* - the idea is that you view the game on screen from the same angle that you would view the real thing, so shots are really lined up from behind the cue ball rather than floating over a plan-view table like you're having some kind of out-of-the-body experience. The table can be rotated through various axes and viewed from adjustable proximity, so you can see what's going on from virtually every angle conceivable - the computerised equivalent of walking around the table and leaning in to get a better idea of angles and distances before playing a shot.

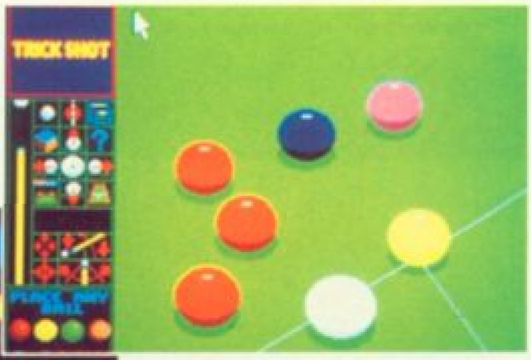
More than anything, the trick with Snooker games has always been simulating ball movement accurately, so that the game plays as it should, without balls careening off at inexplicable angles or suddenly running out of momentum for no apparent reason. In *JWWS* everything is spot on, and those who play the real thing regularly will be most impressed, as they see that they make the same mistakes on screen as they do on a real table. As in the real game, amateur players are likely to get mighty miffed until they learn how thick or thin to hit a ball in order for it go at the right angle, but once you've picked up the nack there's nothing quite as satisfying (and tense) as break-building.

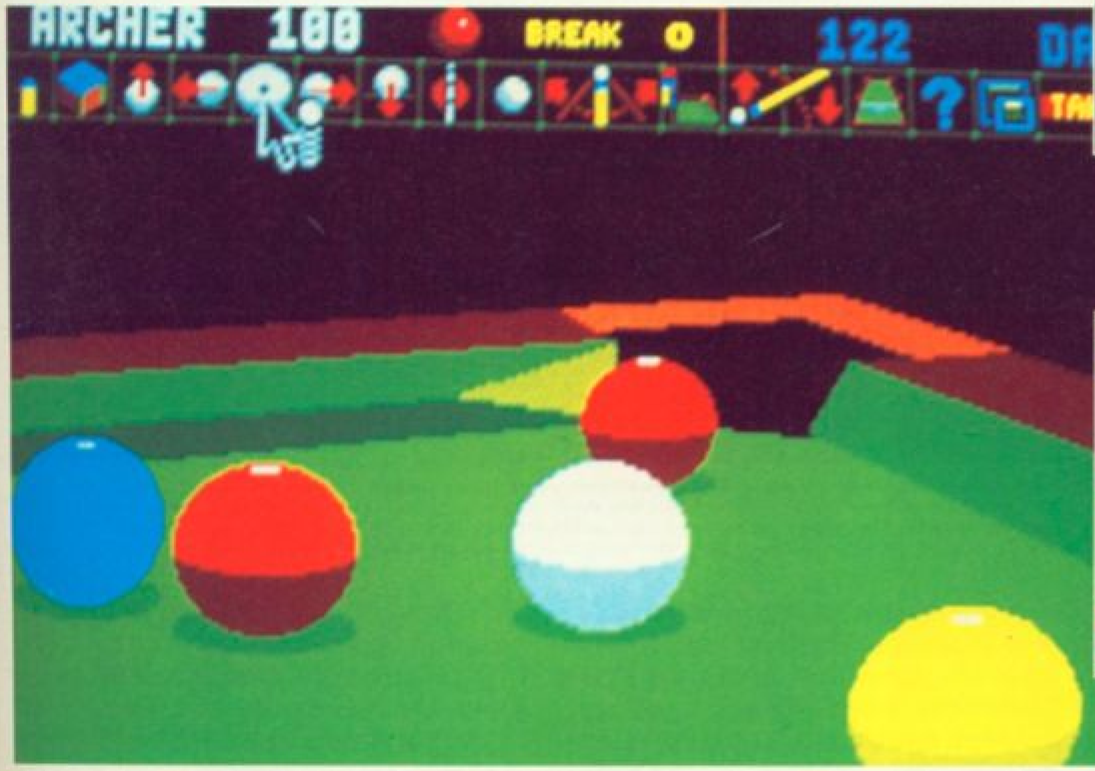


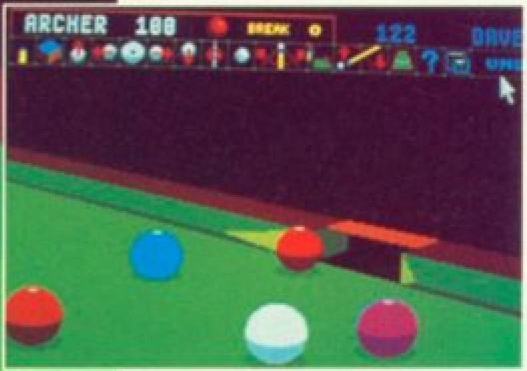
(Above) A special computerised targetting line is available at all times, and often invaluable for when playing long or tricky shots - show-offs will prefer to leave it off, though. In its more advanced form, the line also shows how the cue ball will bounce off cushions - particularly valuable when trying to get out of snookers of "double" a ball into the opposite pocket.

(Right Inset) If you need to swerve the cue-ball over a short distance (to go around a ball between you and your target for instance), you need a Massay shot. For non-snooker buffs, this is where the cue is raised almost vertically and the cue ball is struck at an acute angle. In *JWWS*, the view of such a shot is recreated accurately, so the higher you "tilt the table", the more swerve will be applied. Warning: this shot is strictly for the pros.

(Below Inset) When a shot is played, special "cameras" can be put into operation to track the action around the table. The cue ball, target ball or both can be locked onto and followed, so things never happen out of sight. This mode is also quite handy for impressing your mates - we've yet to find anyone whose eyes haven't been sent a-goggling by its high-speed shenanigans.

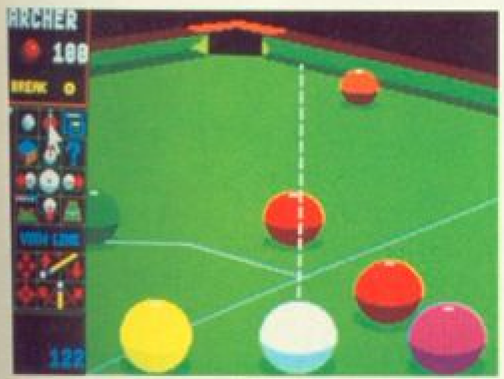






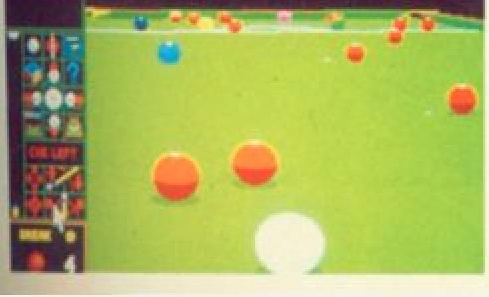
(Above Main Picture) A lot of thought has gone into *JWWS*'s icon control - the control panel can even be viewed in two different ways so that it never gets in the way of the action. Spin, screw, swerve and power are all just a mouse click away, and before long you find yourself setting up shots instinctively, without even having to think about it. Full marks for implementation here, as the less time you have to spend fiddling with troublesome icons, the more grey matter you can devote to the shot in hand.

SNOOKER



(Above) Various plan views are available, giving a more complete view of the table. It's inadvisable to play shots from here as fine angles are difficult to judge, but it's often handy for seeing, for example, how far a target ball is away from a pocket and therefore what kind of shot is required.

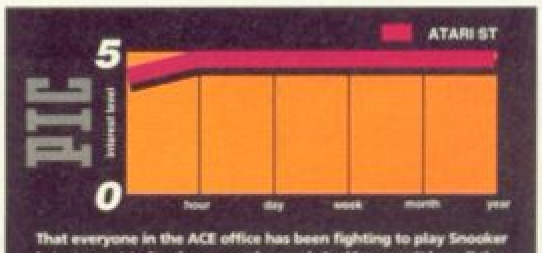
(Below) You should aways remember to chalk your cue before playing a shot. It only takes a mouse click, but like the real thing it's all too easy to forget and playing with a "dry" cue can result in some awful clunky mis-cues and foul shots.



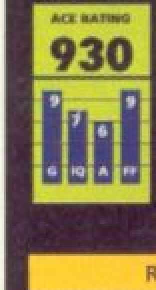
While a two-player game is obviously the most fun, a variety of computer opponents are provided for solo people to play. They are Tom (easy), Dick (good), Harry (harder) and Jimmy (White, the champion). As you progress, you can hone your game, incorporating more sophisticated tactics like positional play (you're lost at serious level without it). Swerve, stun, screw and every type of spin imaginable are all possible, and vital for such dirty tricks as snookering your opponent.

The end result of such a comprehensive and realistic approach to recreating snooker is without doubt the most authentic and playable sports simulation ever seen on a home computer. It looks the same, plays the same and it's virtually impossible to find something you can do on a real table that you can't do here (short of tearing the cloth). The only omission would seem to be the absense of rest shots - no matter how awkwardly a shot is positioned, it's always reachable with a standard cue. That minor niggle aside, *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* is the ultimate sports simulation to date - and unless some bright spark devises a way to beam a holographic image of a snooker table from the ST into your front room, it's going to stay that while for quite some time.

● Gary Whitta



That everyone in the ACE office has been fighting to play Snooker is testament to its phenomenal appeal. And because it has all the qualities of the real thing (while being substantially cheaper and taking up much less space). it's unlikely to lose its appeal for quite some time.



ATARI ST

The fastest, smoothest, sexiest 3D you've ever seen is on display, along with top-notch presentation that suits the high-brow feel perfectly. Sound is of course minimal, but what there is is ideal (although the finger-popping sound when you pot a ball is a little strange). Listen out for the crowd applause when you build a decent break - very satisfying indeed. What more can we say? It's just excellent, and that's it.

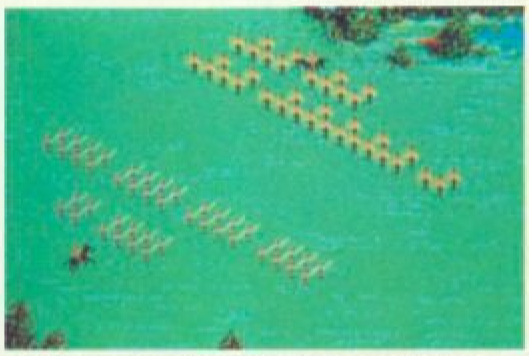
RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	SEPTEMBER
ATARI ST	£24.99	SEPTEMBER
IBM PC	£29.99	NEXT YEAR

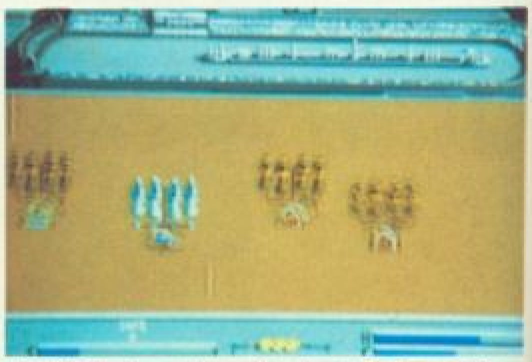
CENTURION

DEFENDER OF ROME

Friends! Romans! Megadrive owners! Lend ELECTRONIC ARTS your ears...



The First Roman Army faces off against an angry barbarian force for control of a territory. Since the numbers look about even, this one will all be down to tactics.



Chariot Racing is a good way to make a fast buck - providing you've got the skill to get across the finish line first. It's possible to bribe your opponents to give you a better chance, but don't be too sure of yourself.

Looking back through the annals of world history, it's not difficult to find that, in their heyday, the Romans really knew how to put themselves about a bit. In their time the boot boys in leather skirts stoved in more than a few heads and stamped their authority throughout Europe. Electronic Arts' simulation of those great and gory days first appeared on the PC late last year, with an Amiga version following shortly after - now Megadrive owners, so far stuck with a diet of shoot-'em-ups and platform games, are in on the act.

Centurion is ever-so-slightly similar in its basic approach to strategy to that crusty Cinemaware classic *Defender of the Crown* - which, upon further investigation, is hardly surprising as the author of both games is one and the same, Kellyn Beck

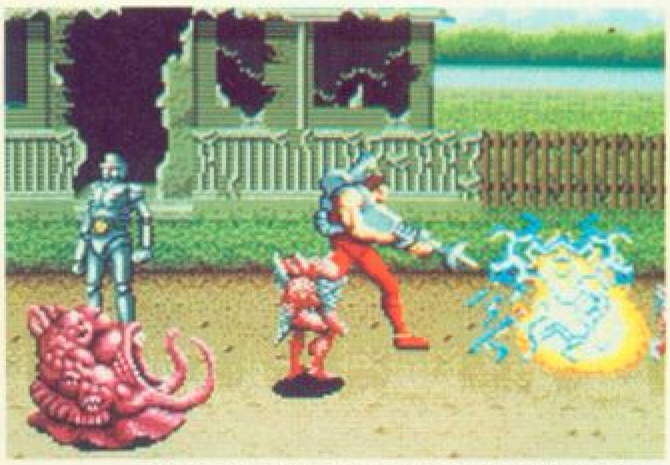
You're cast as an aspiring young Centurion, with a duty to defend his homeland and at the same time spread the Roman empire as far afield as possible by capturing foreign provinces. Things kick off in Rome (you know, that place all roads lead to), with a single legion of soldiers under your command and a city full of already disgruntled citizens to deal with.

The fact is, getting your gloved mitts on other provinces ain't easy. The people that live around Italy may not be as technologically advanced as you, but they don't take kindly to'the Romans marching into their territory and assuming control. To win a province over, you've either got to schmooze them into a friendly alliance or, if they're not going to listen to reason or you just feel belligerent, blitz them on the battlefield and seize the reigns of power.

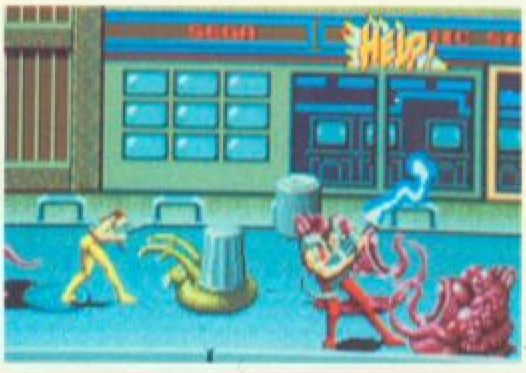
Friendly alliances are relatively easy to organise - providing the other party is willing to listen. Problem is, most of the time they're not – so violence is often the only alternative. When the two armies face off, a variety of classic Roman battle strategies are available to you and making the right choice, based on the size and characteristics of the opposing forces, is vital.

ALIEN STORM

This time it's really really personal - courtesy of those slimey xenomorphs at SEGA



Babooom! Taste electric death, alien scum! Beefcake Gordon kicks xenomorph butt while the android Scooter looks on in *Alien Storm*.



Attack of the killer trashcans. Gordon and Karla's weapons have a limited energy supply, which must be topped up by collecting the bonus icons. If a weapon runs dry, they're reduced to hitting the aliens with the butt of the gun. Scooter's electric whip has infinite energy, so he's alright.

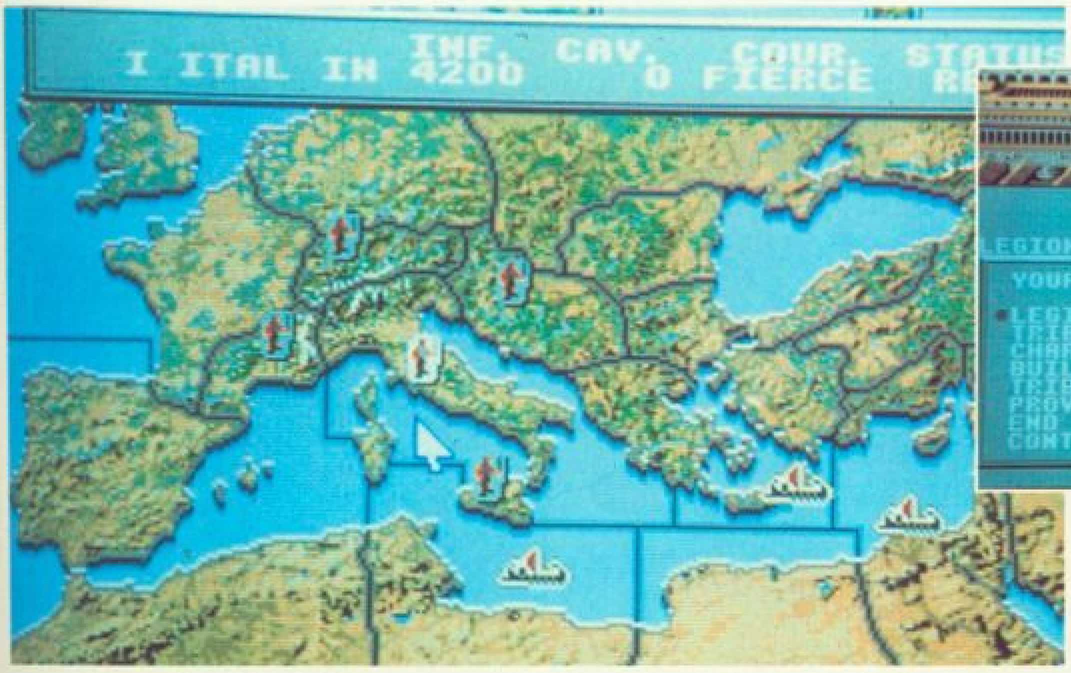
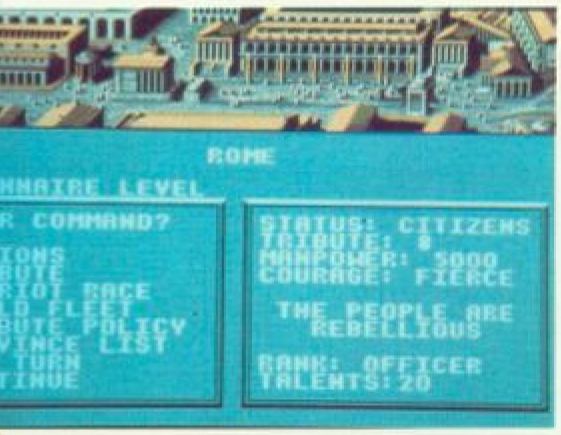
Aaaiieee! Aliens are over-running the Earth! Not the nice sort of aliens either, not like the ones with the spindly arms at the end of *Close Encounters*. No, these ones are really horrible, with big, slavering mouths full of razor-sharp teeth, leathery scales and big claws. And they're not here to be our mates either. Instead they're spending their time rounding up innocent humans, eating their houses and generally taking over the planet.

Between them and planetary denomination stand three awesome shadowy figures. The ultimate warriors. The Earth's last line of defence. Or something.

Their names are Gordon (super-butch male), Karla (well-endowed flamethrower woman) and Scooter (C-3PO lookalike with an electric bullwhip). Together they must complete eight missions, blasting the alien filth back to the galactic hellhole they crawled out of. And a good thing too!

Alien Storm, converted from the Sega coin-op, is a one or two player kicking-in extravaganza that's best described as *Golden Axe* with guns and extra bits. The hero(es) stroll along from left to right and as they go are accosted by all manner of alien hordes. Combat is simple enough - just hammer away at the fire button to deal out whatever death you're equipped with until the alien shrivels up and dies. The trick is doing it without letting said aliens get close enough to use their own particular special talents against you. Each type of alien has its preferred method of attack, ranging from mindless bashing to jumping on top of you and sucking your face.

When you've battled through to the end of a

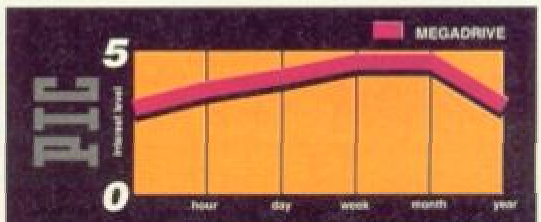
(Above) The main map of Europe is where all the main strategy takes place. From here you select territories to invade, and check on the progress of other armies and fleets.
(Above left) Rome, city of the the living, a paradise on Earth. Many of your most important decisions are made from here - organising games, building your armies and fleets and generally keeping watch over your progress.

If you emerge from the melee victorious, the province is yours to command - but you'll have to work hard to keep it that way, fighting more battles to quell resistance forces and organising games to keep the populace happy. You'd be well advised not to squeeze them too hard for taxes, or you'll find yourself with a rebel uprising right on your doorstep.

As the game progresses, so does your rank and level of power. More men come under your command and you have access to ships to spread your empire still further. You may even get a shot at seducing Cleopatra and becoming Emperor of Rome. Hot stuff.

Strategy fans looking for something challenging but not too Tefal-heady will lap this up - it's an especially attractive proposition for Megadrive owners, who until now have only been using their brains to send electrical impulses to their joypad fingers. All said and done, it's a nice introduction to strategy, and hopefully not the last game of this type we see on the 'Drive.

● Gary Whitta



Because the strategy isn't too torturous, *Centurion* doesn't take long to get into - but there's still enough there to keep you conquering for a while to come.

ACE RATING
810

G	IQ	A	FF
6	8	4	7

MEGADRIVE

Graphically almost identical to the Amiga version, it's not the sort of stuff to get techno-freak Megadrive owners wetting their knickers. But it's gameplay that counts and there's plenty of that to keep you busy. Unfortunately the sound's a bit of a let-down, with unatmospheric music and particularly annoying SFX in the battle scenes.

RELEASE DETAILS

MEGADRIVE £39.99 OUT NOW

---

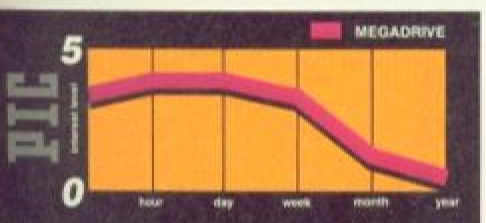
street, corridor or whatever there's some human rescuing to be done. Enter a rather interesting (and very fast paced) *Beast Busters* style sub-section played in first-person perspective as you torch everything in sight through your weapon's roving crosshairs. In addition to the aliens swarming about and leaping at you, there are life-restoring medipacks to blast (a neat feature is the game of ping-pong that often develops in two-player mode as you and your mate battle it out for the bonuses - the prize goes to the last person to shoot the icon as it falls down the screen) and you can also blow the hell out of the background, just for a laugh. What seems strange, however, is that the human hostages that run across the screen to safety can't be shot. It might have been better to leave them vulnerable, *à la Operation Thunderbolt*, so the player must be careful where he shoots.

Anyway, once that's all over with, there's another short sub-section where the players run at high speed across the landscape, shooting everything in their way, and then it's back to the familiar action on the next, tougher mission. And that's about your lot. The ubiquitous end-of-level nasties are out in force, and the designers have done their best to make them as bizarre and as gruesome as possible - although since the game has such a camp air about it (innocent dustbins and oil drums come alive as mutant snails and attack you), it's difficult to take any of it seriously. Perhaps that's why it's much more fun in two-player mode, because you can have a laugh with your partner while you blow away all and sundry, particularly in the gunsight section.

What disappoints most is that the heroes' weapons really aren't that good and, while some of the action set-pieces and smart bombs are quite impressive, the guns themselves are a bit pathetic and don't have the kind of awesome wasting power that would have given this game some real fun. Marks for effort – and fans of the coin-op and *Golden Axe* will be happy enough – but at the end of the day, I'm afraid, this one misses its target.

● Gary Whitta

Thanks to Shekhana Consoles (081 889 9412) for the loan of this review cartridge.



It's easy enough to get the hang of things and the difficulty curve is well graded, so it doesn't get too tough too fast. Only problem is, it's maybe a little too easy and, once it's completed, you're unlikely to have much incentive to return. Selectable difficulty levels go some way to rectifying that, though.

ACE RATING
699

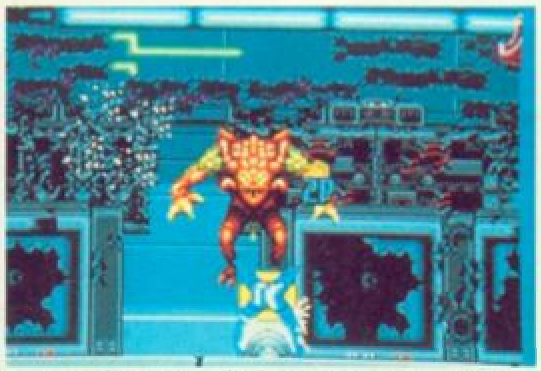
G	IQ	A	FF
7	1	6	6

MEGADRIVE

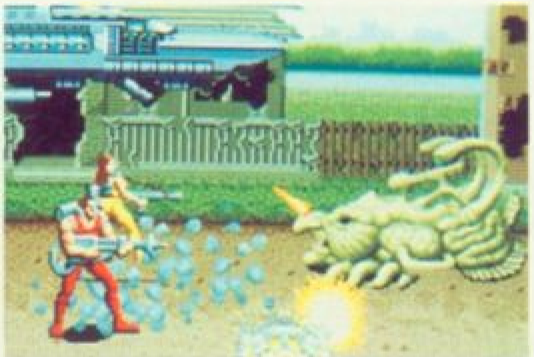
Very pretty graphics, but they have a rather flimsy look about them. The sound effects work, but the music doesn't - it's certainly not the kind of thing you find yourself humming in the street. It's still head and shoulders above your average Megadrive arcade effort, but that's only because the majority of them are so poor.

RELEASE DETAILS

MEGADRIVE £34.99 OUT NOW (Import)



The *Beast Busters*-esque sub-sections often turn into player-versus-player tennis games as the partners fight over who gets the most power-ups.



A typical end-of-level guardian accosts Elvis-lookalike Gordon and busty Karla. This one shoots electric bolts from its head and tail. Get in close and shoot like crazy!

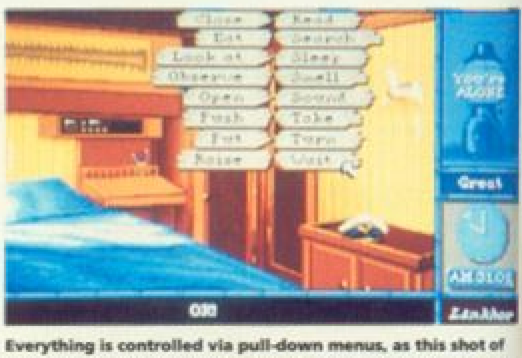
Maupiti Island

Is LANKHOR's gallic whodunnit worth further investigation? Hercule ACE finds out...

Ah, you can't beat a good whodunnit. Come the weekend, what could be better than grabbing a few tinnies and crashing down in front of the box with Lieutenant Columbo ("There's just one thing I don't understand"), Inspector Morse ("Shut up, Lewis") or, that old stalwart, Chief Inspector Wexford ("It wuz a croiyme of paar-shunn!"). As far as games are concerned, however, the detective genre has never really become much more than just a quiet backwater, with only the occasional offering (normally, for some reason, from across the channel) popping up from time to time.

Things are looking up, however, with Delphine's *Cruise For A Corpse* looking set to revitalise the genre when it surfaces later this summer, and in the meantime we've got another continental effort to keep budding Spenders on their toes. *Maupiti Island* is set on an isolated tropical caribbean paradise where you, vacationing detective Jerome Lange, have been stranded by a malevolent cyclone. During your stay on the island a young girl, Marie, is kidnapped and you agree to head up an investigation to find her. Pretty shaky stuff of course, but no worse than your average TV 'tec set-up.

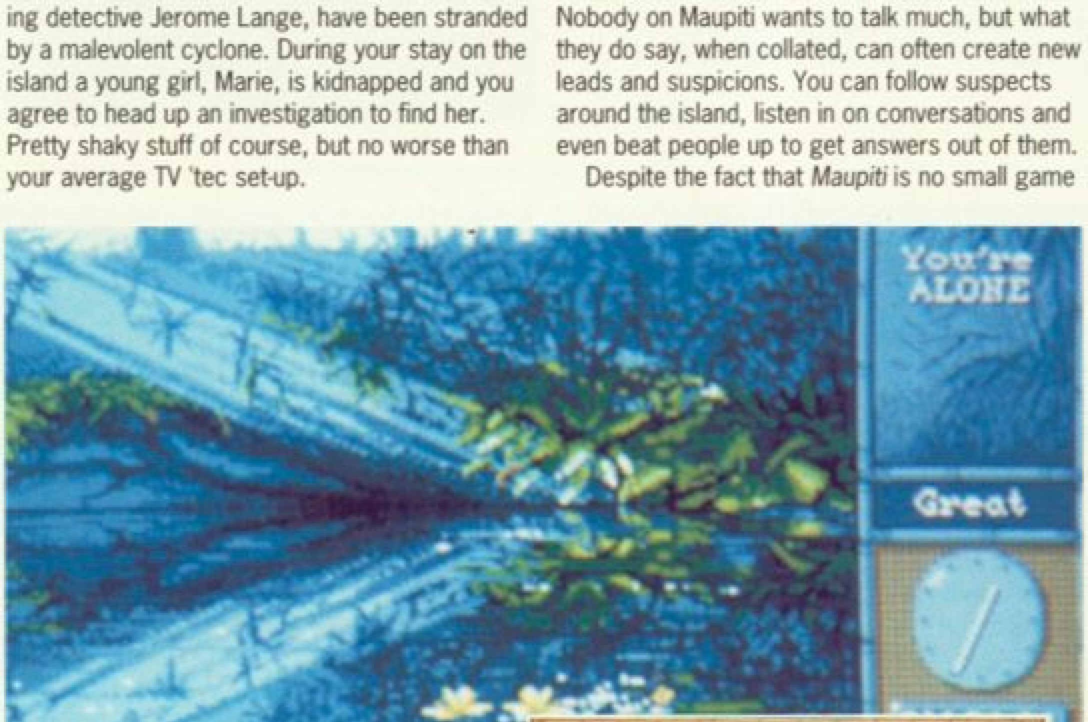
In typical French style, all your detection work is done in what is supposedly the most convenient way possible, so no matter how complex the plot gets, all you ever have to do is make a couple of mouse clicks to do whatever you want. Everything is menu and graphic-controlled - you're presented with a first-person view of your surroundings, with the menus comprising the various actions (take, talk, ask, push, etc) at the top of the screen. You pick up clues by looking for interesting objects (most locations have them, you just have to look very carefully), and questioning the right people. Nobody on Maupiti wants to talk much, but what they do say, when collated, can often create new leads and suspicions. You can follow suspects around the island, listen in on conversations and even beat people up to get answers out of them.

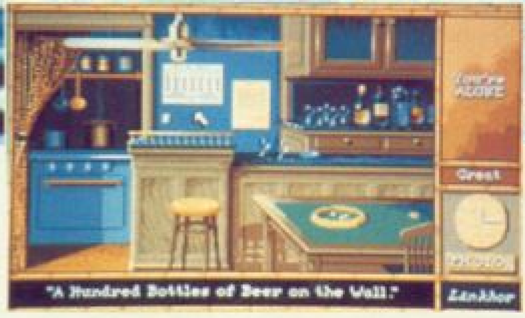


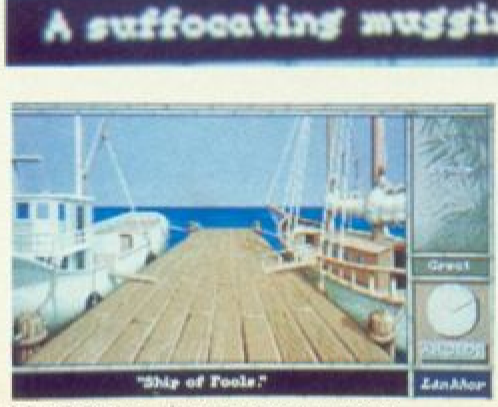
Everything is controlled via pull-down menus, as this shot of your starting location, your cabin aboard a luxury boat, shows. Before you leave, look in the cabinet for some useful items.

Despite the fact that *Maupiti* is no small game (there are plenty of characters and locations), it somehow gives the impression of being very limited, and somehow claustrophobic. While much is made of the complex plot, the majority of players are likely to get fed up before they get far enough for a discovery to spur them on, and only the most determined are going to persist. There's plenty of potential in the whodunnit genre as old classics like *Murder On The Mississippi* and *Vera Cruz* have shown over the years. This, however, doesn't go anywhere near realising it. If you're really itching for a 'teccy game, something tells me you'd do much better to wait for *Cruise For A Corpse*. So do that instead.

● Gary Whitta

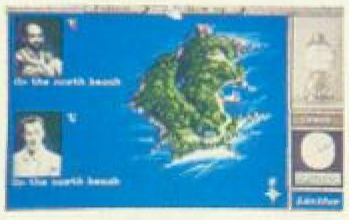






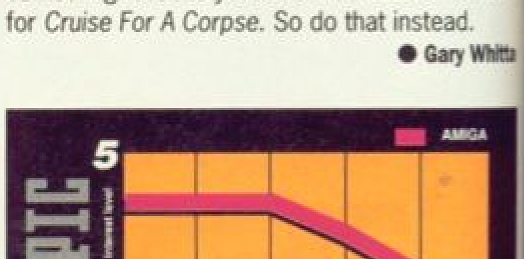
(Above) The pier, where your boat is anchored.

(Above top) Keep your wits about you in the swamp.



(Above) The seedy island bar is a great place for eavesdropping on private conversations.

(Left) Discreetly pursuing a suspect around the island.



The pretty graphics and sound soon draw you in, but unless you have the patience of a saint and the motivation to match, you're unlikely to get engrossed, so that poor old PIC never really reaches giddy heights. Straight to the back of the shelf with this one.

ACE RATING

504

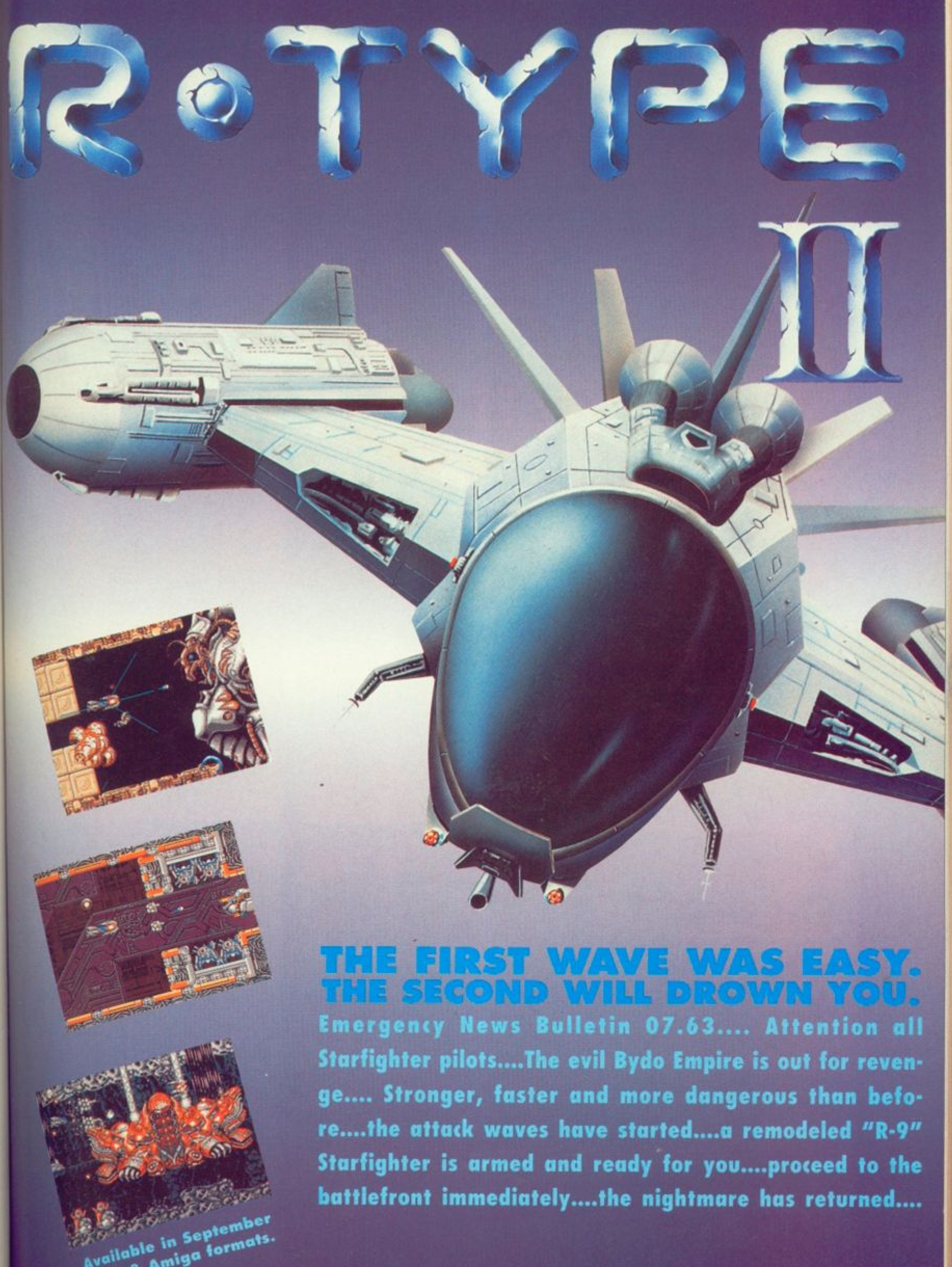
G	IQ	A	FF
6	8	6	4

AMIGA

Very pretty and well-detailed graphics - maybe a little too well-detailed, as it's often difficult to see what's going on or pick out objects. The sound's a bit of a mixed bag, ranging from some excellent Samba-style tunes to incredibly infuriating Amiga-speech that accompanies EVERYTHING the characters say. The perpetual SFX in the background just makes it all the more irritating.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£25.99	OUT NOW



THE FIRST WAVE WAS EASY.
THE SECOND WILL DROWN YOU.

Emergency News Bulletin 07.63.... Attention all Starfighter pilots....The evil Bydo Empire is out for revenge.... Stronger, faster and more dangerous than before....the attack waves have started....a remodeled "R-9" Starfighter is armed and ready for you....proceed to the battlefront immediately....the nightmare has returned....

Available in September on ST & Amiga formats.

ACTIVISION

SLIDERS

Is PALACE's latest slippery when wet or just wet?

Hey, man. Hit the white room. Futuresports are back in style. Core Design's *Retro* and EA's *CyberFight* are both being revved up for release soon, and rumours abound concerning the signing of the official *Rollerball* licence. While we wait for these to turn up however, we at least have *Sliders* to keep us going - although if this is an accurate representation of how the future is going to turn out, we might as well turn it in now.

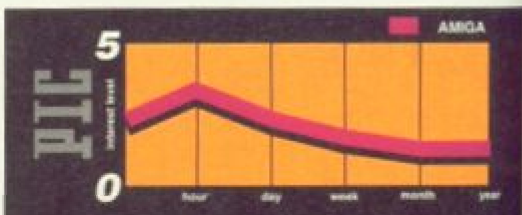
Sliders is played over a series of 12 4-way scrolling isometric chequered playfields. Each player takes control of a free-floating sphere that slides around the landscape after a little puck, which also slides around the object. The idea is to score goals by getting the puck to pass over the opponent's score zone, which also acts as the starting point for each player. Now, each sphere comes equipped with a little compass thing that always points in the direction of the puck to help you find it, and once it's found you can use magnetic power to attract the puck and fix it onto your sphere. When locked on you can then fire the puck in any direction you choose, hopefully sending it sliding over the score zone.

Extra gameplay elements are provided by landscape features that crop up as you make your way through the playfields - there are magnetic arrows which force you in various directions, steep hills, narrow catwalks and a variety of different surfaces that slow you down, speed you up and send you bouncing around. And that's about your lot, really. Thankfully, the game's front end is very user-friendly, allowing you to change just about every game parameter (speed of the spheres, inertia, friction, shot power *et al*) - a vital addition, as the game is frustrating to the point of wanting to put your foot through the monitor screen with the default settings.

The crying shame about *Sliders* is that, because it's basically a good idea, it had tremendous potential to be playable - and that makes it all the more frustrating. There's nothing more annoying than playing a game that's oh-so-nearly excellent but has been wasted by sloppy execution. There are brief moments, particularly in the split-screen two-player mode, when the game really is fun, but the whole thing is lost because of a few frustrating elements. For a start it's incredibly difficult to score a goal, because half the time you have to guess where the goal is, and when it's on screen it's even more difficult to actually get the puck to touch the score zone. The only way to make scoring easier is to turn the Throw Power right down so you can get close, then just trundle it over, but this slows down the rest of the game because you then can't throw the puck at a reasonable distance across the field. Surely a more sensible alternative would have been to relate the shot power to how long the fire button is depressed?

Another frustrating flaw is the over-use of landscape features, particularly the slow-down tiles and magnetic arrows. All the do is interfere with the game itself, and thus they detract from the overall effect rather than adding to it. Remember guys, sometimes less is more. At the end of the day it's a funny old game, and *Sliders* is a game that could have been excellent but instead isn't. And that's the biggest shame of all, really.

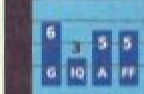
● **Gary Whitta**



Initially rather tricky to get into, some fun does develop once you've got the basic hang of things - especially if you're playing a human opponent. From that point on, however, things never really take off and frustration soon sets in.

ACE RATING

690

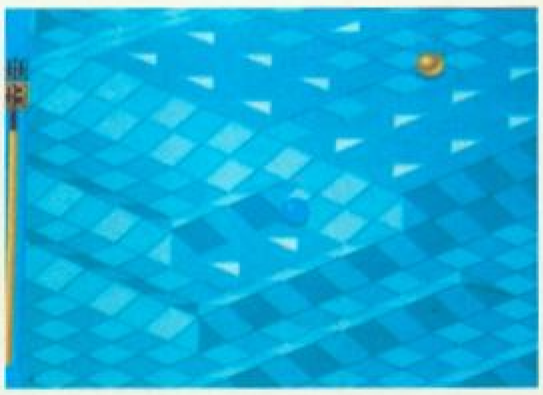


AMIGA

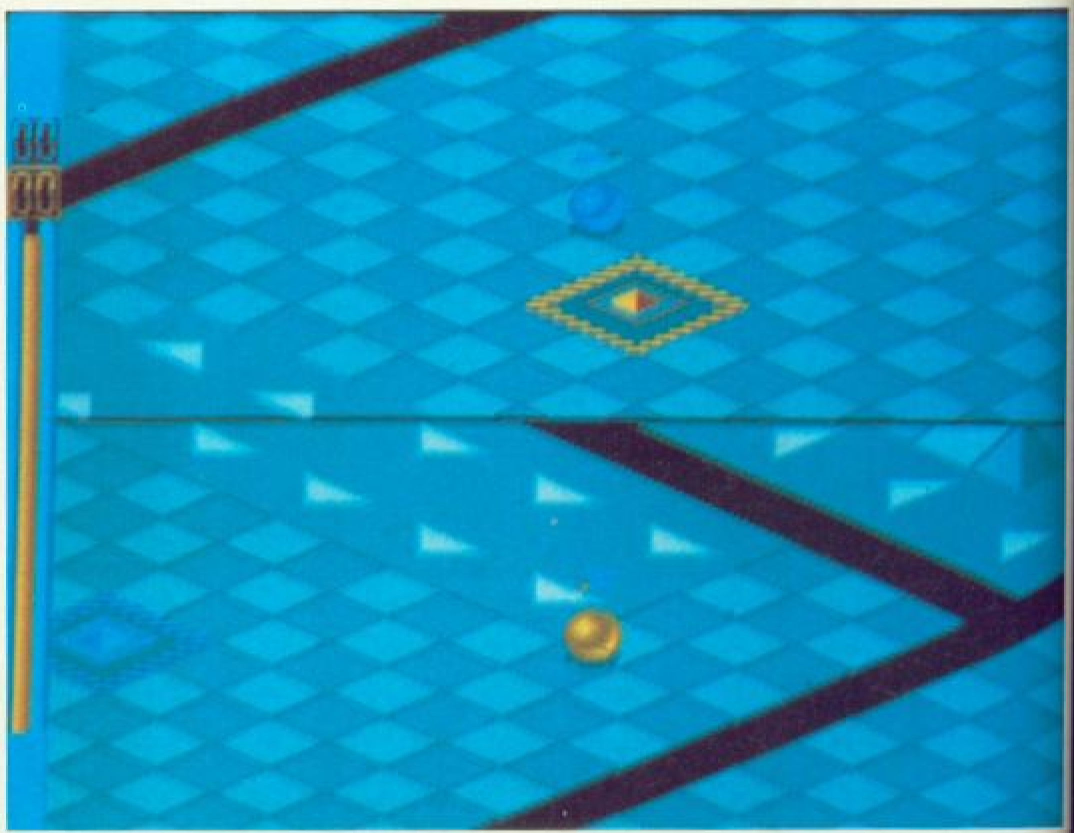
Mmm, fast and smooth multi-way scrolling never fails to impress, especially in split-screen mode when you've got two things going at once. Unfortunately it's not very colourful, and the monochrome playfields are a bit bland. Sound is minimal, but what SFX there are are quite nice - and there's a very bizarre Marilyn Monroe sample when a goal is scored. In fact it all looks and sounds quite agreeable, it's just a shame it's not been put to better use.

RELEASE DETAILS

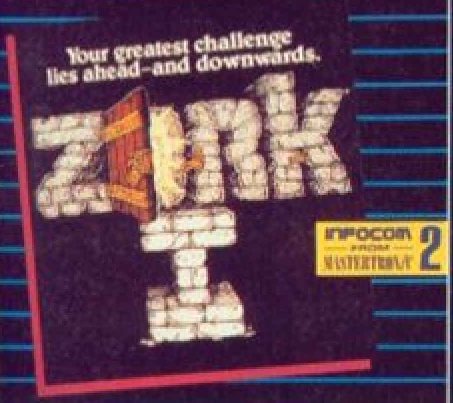
AMIGA	£XX.XX	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£XX.XX	IMMINENT



The problem with Sliders is that even when the player is right next to the goal, predicting where the ball will go is a very much hit and miss affair. Although there's plenty of scope for fiddling around with the gravity, friction and ball control, it won't keep you playing for that long.



The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
DON'T PANIC!
INFOCOM FROM MASTERTRONIC 1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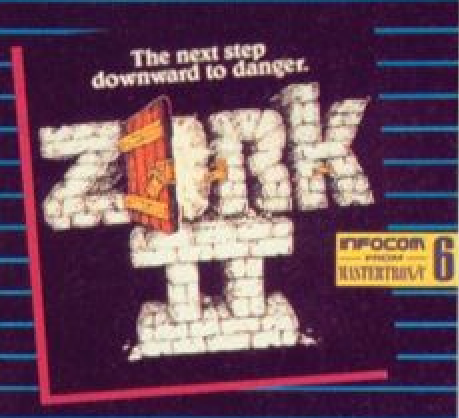
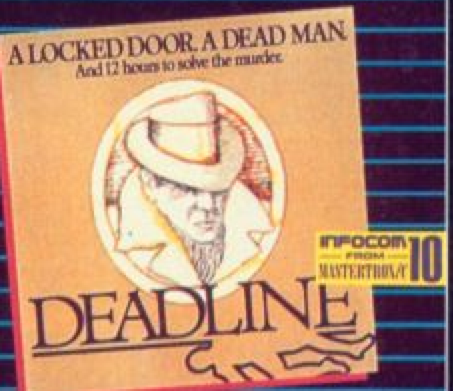

The next step downward to danger.
ZORK II
INFOCOM FROM MASTERTRONIC 6

It all comes down to this.
ZORK III
INFOCOM FROM MASTERTRONIC 7

ENCHANTER
INFOCOM FROM MASTERTRONIC 8

SORCERER
INFOCOM FROM MASTERTRONIC 9


A LOCKED DOOR. A DEAD MAN.
And 12 hours to solve the murder.
DEADLINE
INFOCOM FROM MASTERTRONIC 10

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THE One *for* AMIGA GAMES

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE

Delphine's Long-Awaited Whodunnit Is Finished At Last... Was It Worth The Wait?

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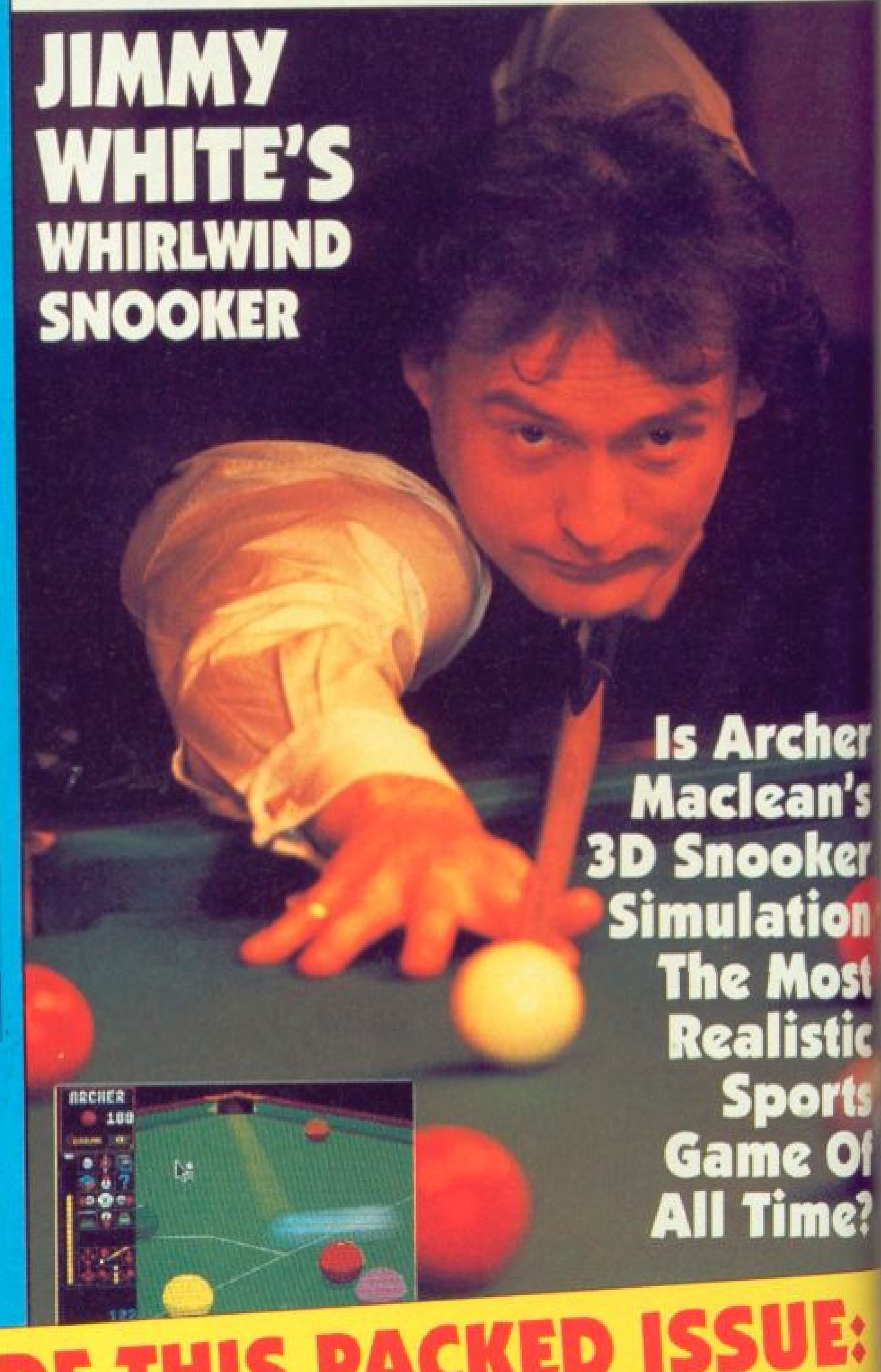

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER

Is Archer Maclean's 3D Snooker Simulation The Most Realistic Sports Game Of All Time?

REVIEWED THIS MONTH:

- CRUISE FOR A CORPSE
- JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER
- MAUPITI ISLAND
- BATTLE CHESS 2
- SWAP
- THUNDERJAWS

MISSING SCRATCH CARD? SEE ABOVE

INSIDE THIS PACKED ISSUE:

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BEAST BUSTERS

Coin-op cabinets with guns mounted on them aren't a new concept. They go back to the turn of the last century, when our arcade-going ancestors piled their money into 'shooting arcade' cabinets and blasted at moving targets with guns that shot ball bearings. Nowadays the guns 'shoot' light and the targets are presented on a video screen, but basically the concept is the same.

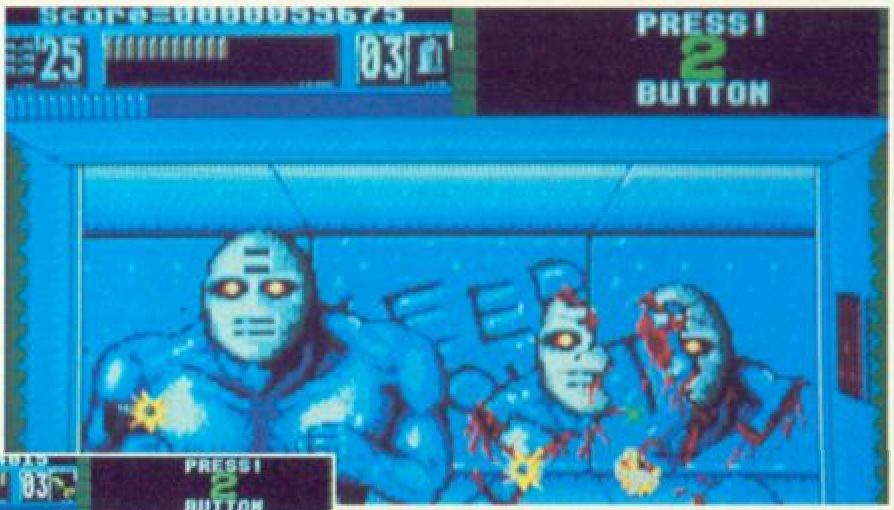
It was Taito who really revitalised the guns-on-machines craze a few years ago, when their Uzi-mounted cabinet *Operation Wolf* took the arcade world by storm. By the time the sequel *Operation Thunderbolt* arrived, every coin-op manufacturer in existence had leaped onto the bandwagon, and now arcades are packed with machines sporting one, two and even three (count 'em) guns!

One such game is *Beast Busters*, more memorable than most because instead of blasting military targets, the players must destroy an army of brown-trouseringly horrific zombies, who are whoopin' it up around a shopping centre in true *Day of the Dead* fashion. All manner of horrors are in there, from zombie dogs to shocking zombie shoppers, and there are big zombie guardians lurking at the end of every zombie level. So it's blast, blast and damn and blast to keep your energy from being sucked up by the zombie scum.

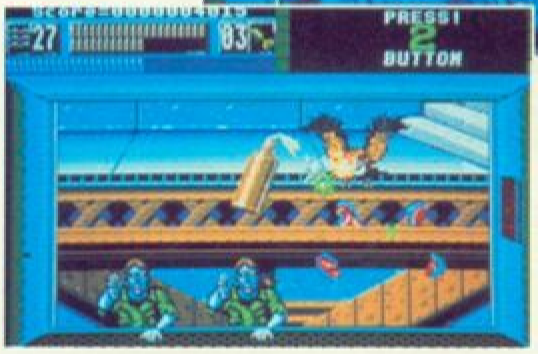
Activision's Amiga conversion certainly manages to capture the looks and action of the original machine. It's got virtually all the levels and the simultaneous two-player action, but I found it all rather dull.

The main problem is that when it comes down to it, playing with a mouse is awkward. In the arcades, having a black placcy Uzi chattering away by your cheek as you blow the beanies out of the baddies is quite fun. Rolling your mouse around the table, pointing the rather jittery sight at targets and pummelling the mouse button just doesn't feel the same.

(Right) Taking a leaf from Jason (*Friday the 13th*) Voorhees' book, these end-of-level Zombies are wearing the latest in afterlife fashion - ice-hockey masks.



(Below) "We're on a one-way express elevator to Hell. Goin' dooooown!"

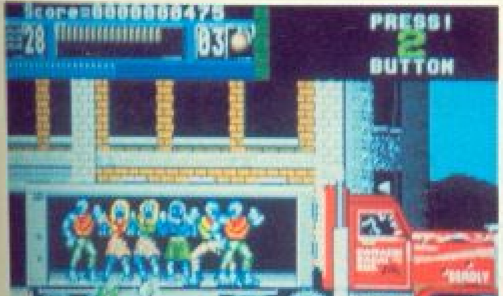


Making things worse is that there's no inertia on the cursor, so you have to be very accurate with your mouse movement, stopping and starting as you whizz it around the screen, rather than moving smoothly. To be honest, you'd be doing virtually the same thing if you challenged yourself to knock out a page on a DTP package in five minutes!

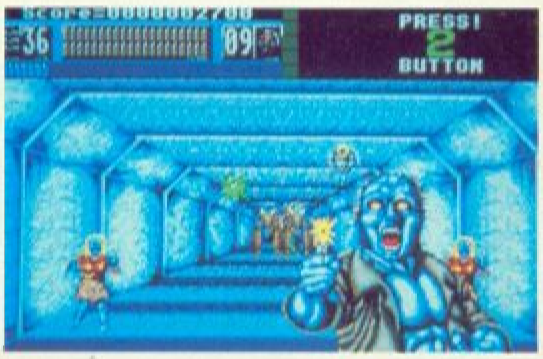
I'm sure that there's an army of people out there that love games like *Operation Thunderbolt* and *Line of Fire*, and are waiting for this with baited nostrils. If you are one such bod, you'll be pleased to hear that the graphics are very close to the arcade original, the sound is quite a laugh - especially the ultra-camp zombie death whimper - and the action is fast and furious enough to maintain a reasonable challenge.

But to me it's fundamentally all to similar to the other games in this genre, except that there are different things to blast. Call me a po-faced hunchback if you will, but I've had my fill of cursor-driven blasters, and this simply doesn't offer enough variety or new ideas to get my gaming glands pulsating.

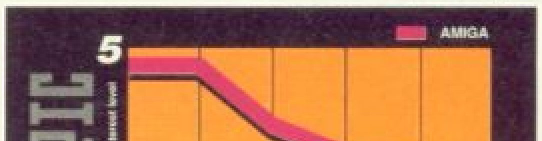
● **Julian Rignall**



Those brain-dead Zombies just keep on truckin'. Just when you think you've got rid of all the Undead on the level, this big red haulage vehicle pulls up and drops the side-hatch to reveal this formation team of fearless killers.



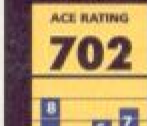
The Undead attack in all manner of ways. Some lunge in close and fire at you point-blank, others totter down the corridor, swaying from side to side to avoid your bullets. There are also swarms of evil-minded owls to contend with.



Beast Busters looks good and plays better, but these point 'n' fire shoot-'em-ups are getting more than a little *passé*, and there's not much here that you haven't seen before in some or other.

ACE RATING

702



AMIGA

A robust conversion of the gun-mounted coin-op which features good graphics and sound. However, the control method is rather fiddly, and those who've already got a couple of these types of games in their collection might find that the unoriginal gameplay becomes dull very quickly.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£25.99	OUT NOW

WILD WHEELS

Go for a spin with OCEAN's car-based future sport

What's this? A game from Ocean that's NOT a coin-op or film licence? Surely *Wild Wheels* is not - Heaven forbid! - an original game? Well, yes, it is, and the good news is that it isn't half bad.

Wild Wheels can best be described as 3D *Kick Off* with cars. Two teams of five high-speed highly-armoured roadsters compete for the right to shunt a giant steel ball around an arena. Points are awarded by scoring goals (surprise!) and keeping the ball in the opposition's half of the arena. From time to time bonuses and power-ups mysteriously appear on the arena floor and can be collected by simply driving over them.

TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES?

The aim is to work your way up from the bottom-rung Alpha League through Beta, Gamma, Delta and so on to become League Champions. It's brutally tough; lose one match and you're out. Fortunately there's a SAVE option so frustration at not being able to get beyond a particularly tough set of matches is kept to a minimum.

The in-game action is viewed from a 'camera' floating just above the car, looking towards the opposition's end, and mixes solid-3D polygons for the pitch and shrinking/enlarging sprites for the competing cars. This is all well and good and it looks very pretty, but it can be hard working out where the ball's gone.

Arrows indicating the ball's position help, but you'll still discover that during play you spend more time looking at the overhead scanner than watching the 3D action. Winning often seems more down to luck than any skill on the player's part.

ADDED INTEREST

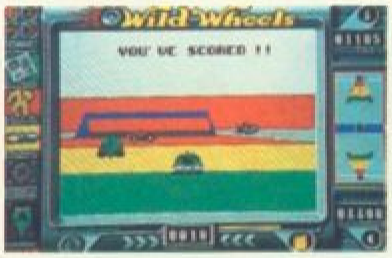
Programmers Red Rat have obviously realised that the basic premise, while entertaining enough, lacks depth, so they've introduced several features to try and help sustain player interest. There are three difficulty levels and two control methods; Arcade and Professional.

In Arcade mode the car moves in the direction the player pushes the joystick, while in Professional mode the player pushes up/down to accelerate/decelerate and left and right to rotate the car. The idea is that beginners start in Arcade mode and 'graduate' to Professional, but I found Professional the better control method right from the start.

After a game the points scored are converted into cash which can be used to equip the team with a new cars. Although the cheaper models only vary in minor ways such as how well their tyres grip or how quickly they accelerate, some of the more expensive models are fitted with unique add-ons like giant metal jaws or missile tubes. The higher-powered vehicles require special licences or flame-retardant suit before you're allowed to buy them, which can only be earned by running over the bonus tiles mentioned earlier.

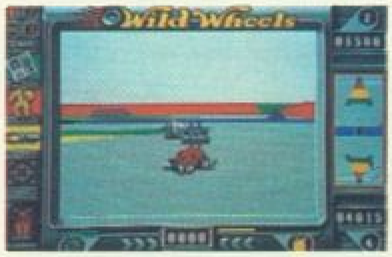
Thus, player interest is sustained by both the urge to find out what the various unique features of the more expensive vehicles do and by the need to 'earn' certain items before these cars can be used. And while these help, they still don't compensate for the lack of real skill or subtlety needed to succeed.

● David Upchurch

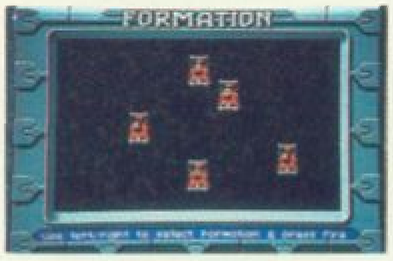


YOU'VE SCORED !!

The points earned from a goal vary depending on which 'zone' you shoot from. The closer to the goal mouth you get, the more points you win.



The plan view of the arena to the right of the 3D screen shows the positions of all the cars, balls and bonuses - you'll spend a lot of the game looking at this to work out where the Hell the action is.



From this screen you can customi your team's driving formation. I can't say I noticed any major differences in how the game played whatever the formation.

TEAM SPIRIT

You can build your team from any combination of these five car types:

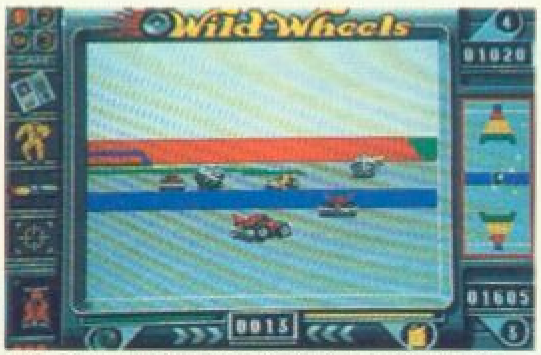
STRIKER - This is the car you control. The quality of its playing is up to you!

KILLER - Actively seeks out the opposition's Striker and tries to ram it to oblivion.

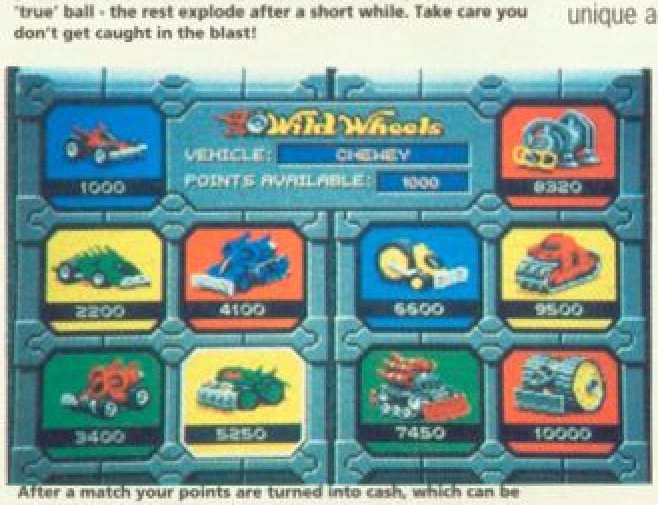
BLOCKER - Tries to protect your car by putting itself between the Striker and the opposition's Killers.

FETCHER - Attempts to herd the ball towards the Striker.

GUARDS - Patrols the goal mouth and tries to block any shots.

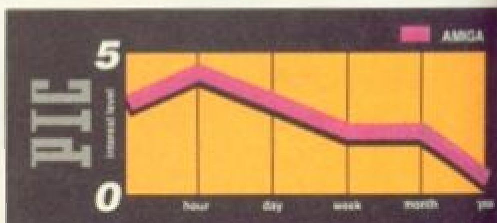


M-m-m-m-m-m-multiball! At random times in the game the giant ball splits into four identical spheres. Only one is the 'true' ball - the rest explode after a short while. Take care you don't get caught in the blast!



VEHICLE: CHENEY
POINTS AVAILABLE: 1000

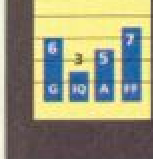
After a match your points are turned into cash, which can be used to buy a new car. The more expensive models have such luxury fittings as front-mounted metal jaws and missile slots.



Fun for a while, but despite the bizarre cars and League structure the game lacks depth and gameplay variety. You're likely to get bored sooner rather than later with this one.

ACE RATING

738



AMIGA

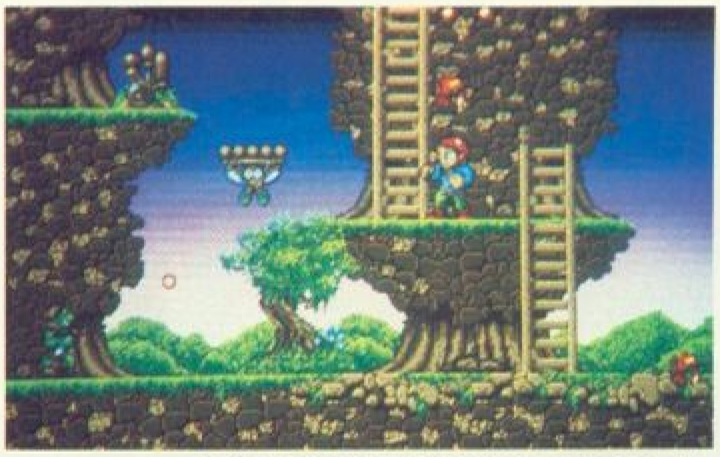
You'll not boot this one up so that you can impress your mates with the graphical and musical abilities of your Amiga; throughout the game the use of colour is unsubtle and occasionally garish, while the jingles have an unfortunate ST-ish tone. That said, the cars are well-drawn if small, and zip about the pitch smoothly. While *Wild Wheels* is highly playable, I have strong doubts about its lasting appeal.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.53	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£25.53	OUT NOW

ELF

OCEAN takes us on a magical mystery tour



Floating platforms carried by hardworking flies act not only handy elevators, but also as vital stepping stones from one platform to another. Jumps have to be judged carefully though, as Cornelius can be killed if he falls too far.

It's only fair to say that, while Ocean chooses to dabble in original software only very rarely, when it does, the fruits of its endeavours are usually very tasty indeed. From the 'Good Old Days' of *Head Over Heels* and *Match Day* to the more recent *F-29 Retaliator* and *Battle Command*, Ocean's original products have often proved themselves to be considerably more appealing than many of the firm's licensed wares. Keen to continue this trend, Ocean is promising a higher proportion of original games in its future line-ups - and if they're all of the same high quality of *Elf*, that can't be a bad thing.

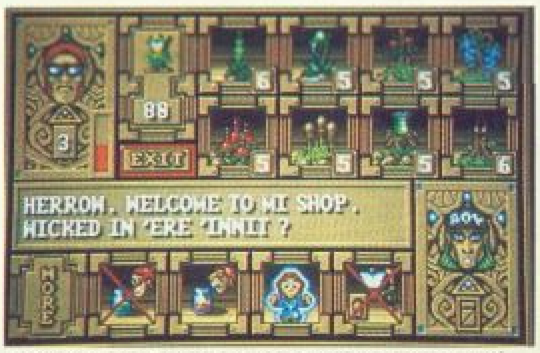
The game casts you as a brave little Elf called Cornelius, whose girlfriend Elisa has been abducted by Necrilous the Not Very Nice. Getting her back involves elfing your way through eight levels of Tolkein-esque fantasy world, starting out in the forest near Cornelius' homeland and ending in the castle of Necrilous himself, where Elisa is slowly being lowered into a vat of boiling liquid. Boo! Hiss!

What all this translates to is six levels of multi-directional scrolling platform action with some hefty shoot'em-up overtones. It's a little like *Rick Dangerous* meets *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* meets *Lord Of The Rings*. There's an unmistakably strong *Dungeons 'n' Dragons* feel to the whole adventure, spiced with a small amount of humour. The result, as you hack, slay and leap your way through the densely-inhabited landscapes, works well, with the pungent atmosphere doing a lot to add to the overall effect.

Each of the six levels is like a giant maze (map-makers will surely stain their pants over this one) comprising all manner of platforms, ladders and dangerous energy-sapping denizens. To protect himself against the latter, Cornelius has some primitive magic power allowing him to fire lethal orbs of energy, and a variety of special powers are available from the local shoppe, should you be lucky enough to find it. Here, magic spells can be purchased in exchange for herbs and animals that Cornelius collects along his travels. The most prized and expensive transform Cornelius into a Hero (as indicated by him wearing a flashy pair of shades) who is impervious to the shots fired by enemies, and a Wolf who can fall any height without hurting himself.

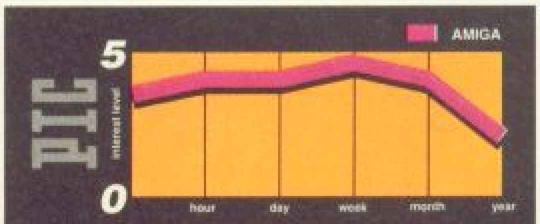
At the end of each level there's a guardian that needs slaying. Each one, when killed relinquishes a green crystal that are used to gain access to Necrilous' chamber on the final level. Getting there, however, is by no means easy. Each level presents its own unique problems, and so new strategies and playing styles need to be developed to overcome them. The common thread, however - platform dexterity and nasty-bashing - hangs together well and remains appealing throughout. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but it's a quality romp, and one that will keep variety-starved platform fans busy into the small hours, no sweat.

● **Gary Whitta**



HERROW. WELCOME TO MI SHOP.
WICKED IN 'ERE 'INNIT ?

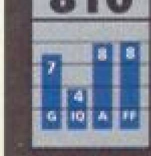
Inside the shop. The display at the top shows how many of each herb you have in your possession. The spells are below, t only those you can afford are highlighted - the rest are crossed out.



It's not an easy to game to get into straight off, but once you've got the knack it's fun fun fun. The eight levels are tough enough to keep even seasoned vets interested for quite a while, but it shouldn't take much more than around a month of solid play to crack.

ACE RATING

810

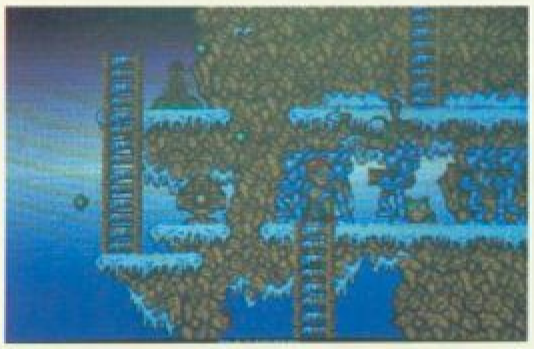


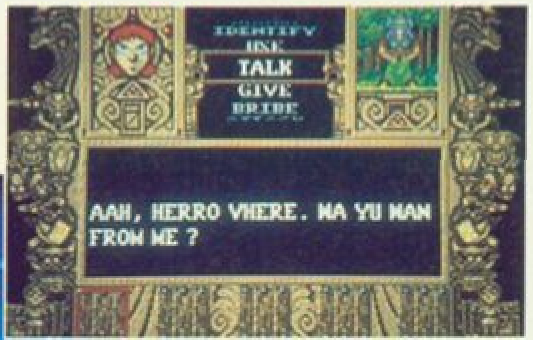
AMIGA

High quality visuals throughout - colourful, chunky and fun, although at times it can get a little tricky to see what's going on in detail. The sound is one of this version's top points, with some of the loveliest music the Amiga has produced in quite a while. Tip-top presentation throughout rounds off an excellent package.

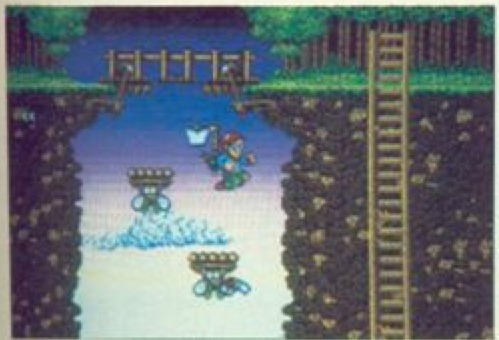
RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£ 25.53	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£ 25.53	OUT NOW

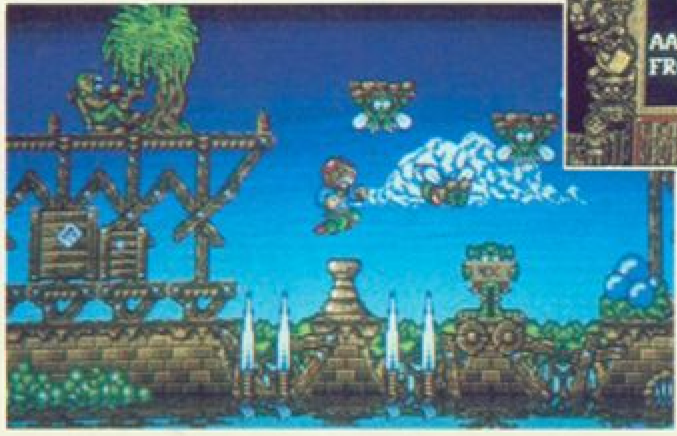




AAH, HERRO VHERE. WA YU WAN
FROM ME ?



The most useful piece of equipment you can buy is the flying machine. With it you can motor around the landscape at high speed without having to bother about platforms or ladders.



(Above) Certain characters that pop up during the game can be interacted with via this interface - many have useful advice to give, if you ask the right questions.

(Above top) Battling in hero mode through level six: snow world. With those sunglasses on, you can't be hurt by enemy shots.

(Left) In wolf mode, Cornelius can fall any distance without hurting himself - but he'll still need to be wary of those deadly spikes.

ISSUE 8 JULY/AUGUST 1991 £1.95

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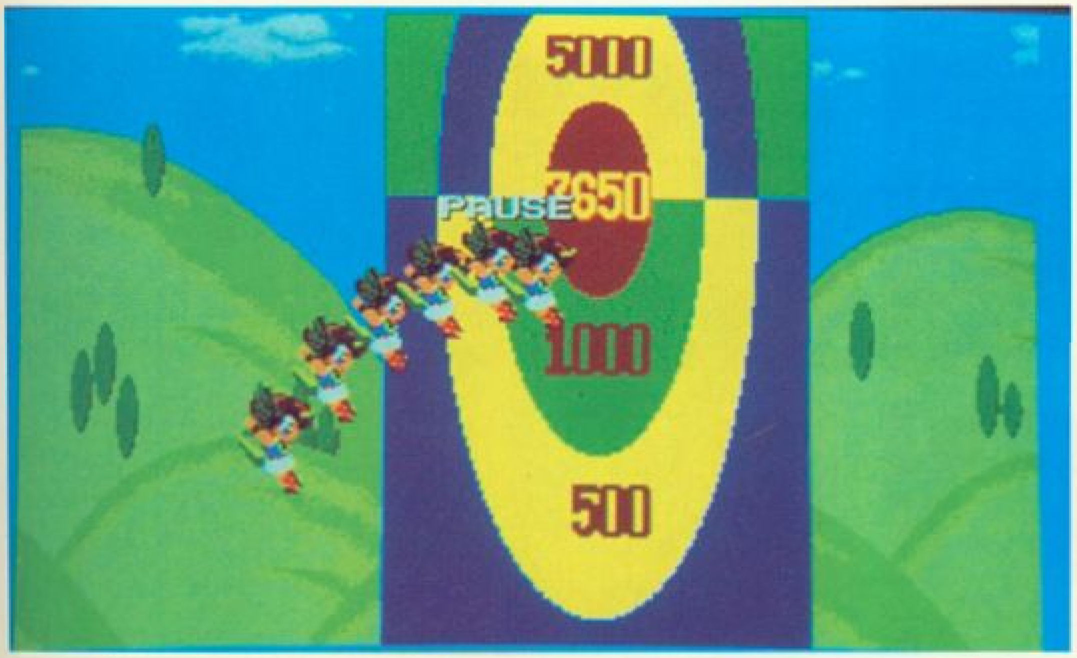
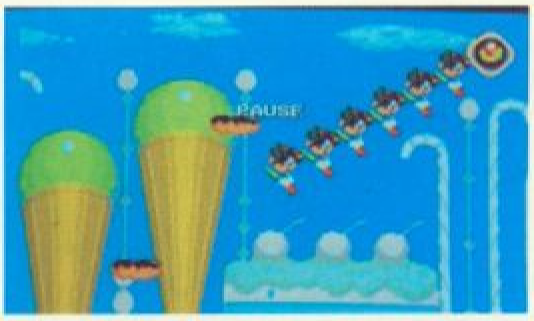
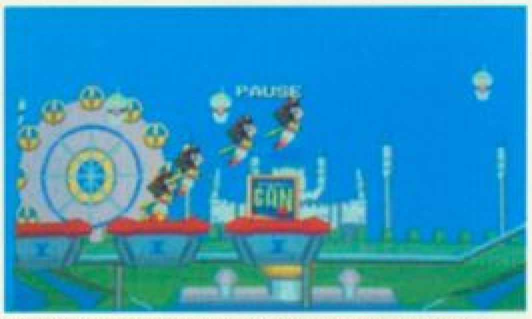






(Above) The clones can be used as a lassoo around certain blocks, allowing the pixie to swing up to unheard of heights. (Top) Some levels see the pixie riding a rollercoaster. Look out for gates that'll knock you off and to the ground far below!

MARVEL LAND

Marvels will never cease! NAMCO prove that you *can* make a silk purse from a sow's ear

Just what is going on? On the one hand you have *Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Alien Storm* setting new graphic standards , and on the other you have *Wardner Special* and now *Marvel Land* proudly parading sprites that look more suited to a C64 game circa 1986. Perhaps the Japanese find these retro-style graphics cute and unusual. Who knows? Strange people, the Japanese...

However, whatever your nationality, there's one thing everyone agrees that a game should have to make it special, and that's addictiveness. So let's give credit where it's due and admit it: *Marvel Land* has this magic ingredient in obscenely large buckets.

No plot surprises. It's yer usual old rubbish about four helpless fairies who have been kidnapped by the wicked Wolf Lord. The villainous dog has placed one of the fairies in each of the four areas of Marvel Land, and it's up to you as the bravest ickle pixie to trek through the several level's making up each area and rescue them.

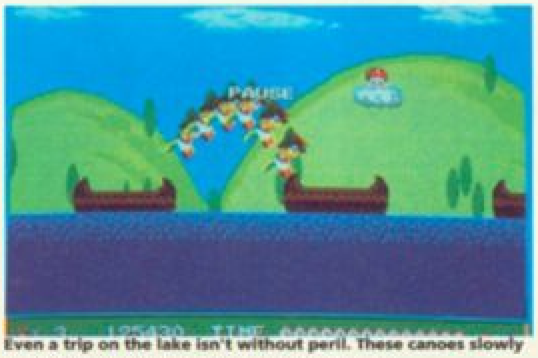
The gameplay harks back to the Good Ol' *Manic Miner* days, with lots of bottomless gaps, deadly lava, crumbling ledges, levitating lifts, moving platforms and - of course - wandering meanies. However, as a concession to these p-M (post-Mario) times, the pixie can bop the baddies into next week by jumping on their heads.

Bonuses and power-ups can be discovered by cracking open golden chests. Most effective is the 'clone' power-up, which causes a bunch of pixie-alikes to string out behind the main sprite as he runs along and jumps about. Tapping fire causes them to swing around the main pixie in a big circle, clobbering anything in range. But every hit causes one of the clones to disappear, so they have to be used wisely.

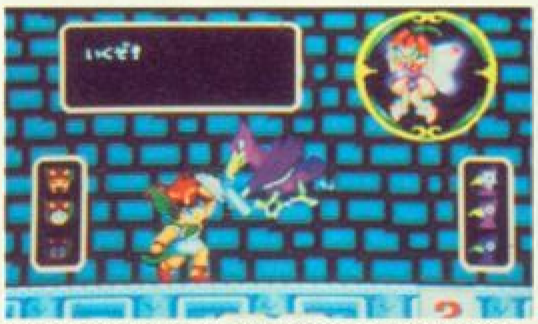
At the zone's end, the pixie must battle one of the Wolf Lord's henchmen. Rather than being a epic slug-it-out, the two foes play 'stone/paper/scissor' - but with a twist. If the pixie wins then the player has to hit fire to strike the baddy before he ducks. If the pixie loses then the player has to defend against attack by pulling back on the joypad. Combat continues until the pixie or the baddy is smashed into submission.

Perhaps it's a touch of nostalgia for *Marvel Land*'s 'old style' gameplay, but this is by far the best game I've played this month. It's easy to pick up, easy to control and easy to like. There are enough surprises and novelties to keep interest going, and a password system means that you can cut past the boring bits. Hell, I'm even starting to like the graphics...

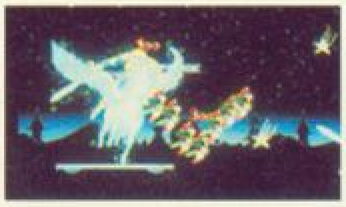
● **David Upchurch**



Even a trip on the lake isn't without peril. These canoes slowly sink when you land on them so hop on pronto.

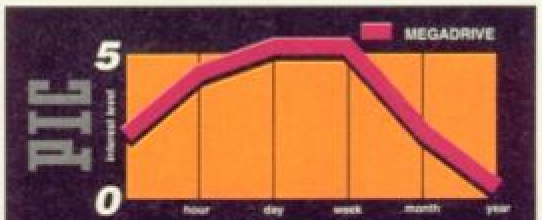


The clash of the titans! The monster's scissors beat the pixie's paper, so defend against the monster's attack.



Complete a zone and it's onto the bonus level. Giant carnival floats drift by and stars fall from the sky. Catch the stars before they hit the ground for loads of points!

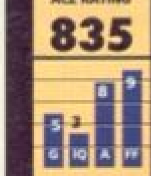
Thanks to Shekhana Consoles (081 889 9412) for the loan of this review cartridge.



Looks like your worst gaming nightmare come to life. But play it and you'll discover more fun here than you'd get in a week at Alton Towers.

ACE RATING

835



MEGADRIVE

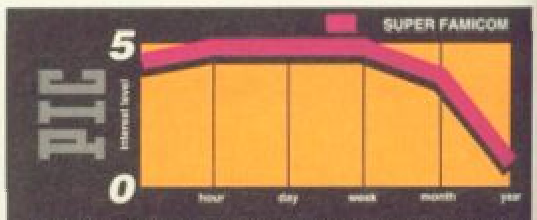
The graphic design fluctuates wildly between just average and plain hideous - some of the sprites look like they've just tunnelled out from a sub-standard Amstrad CPC game. The occasional sluggishness and flicker when a lot's happening don't help either. Sound is very good, with some great hummable tunes.

RELEASE DETAILS

MEGADRIVE £34.99 OUT NOW (Import)

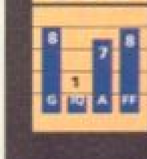
At last, real shoot-'em-up action hits the Famicom - but just how Super is IREM's souped-up conversion of its own coin-op classic?

SUPER R-TYPE



Selectable skill levels do a lot to add to the game's lasting appeal, although it can be tempting to select Kids level and cruise through the whole game without too much trouble. And of course, once you've finished it (which, admittedly on Hard level is going to take a while) you might as well use the cartridge as a doorstop.

ACE RATING
890



SUPER FAMICOM

Beautifully designed and coloured backdrops and aliens make *Super R-Type* a joy to look at, but that sprite flicker can annoy at times. The sound is a winner too, comprising a bevvy of excellent FX and some very enjoyable tunes. All in all, this is one you won't have to try before you buy.

RELEASE DETAILS

SUPER FAMICOM £50.00 OUT NOW (Import)

While the majority of us might find it difficult to take pity on those who are fortunate enough to own Super Famicoms, there has, ever since the machine's appearance, been a gaping void in their gamesplaying lives. They may be well serviced with platform games (*Super Mario World*), beat'em-ups (*Final Fight*) and racing games (*F-Zero*), but apart from the lacklustre *Gradius III*, Famicom owners have been on a stale-bread-and-luke-warm-water diet as far as shoot-'em-ups are concerned - at least until now. And what better way to bring some real action to Nintendo's 16-bit wonder than with a turbocharged version of the best coin-op shoot-'em-up of recent times?

Actually, what you're getting with *Super R-Type* is *R-Type II* with knobs on. Quite a lot of knobs in fact, and shiny brass ones at that. It's nice to see that Irem's designers have gone to the effort of bolting on a few extra bits and bobs, rather than just going through the motions of porting over the coin-op, even if not all of the new additions hit their target.

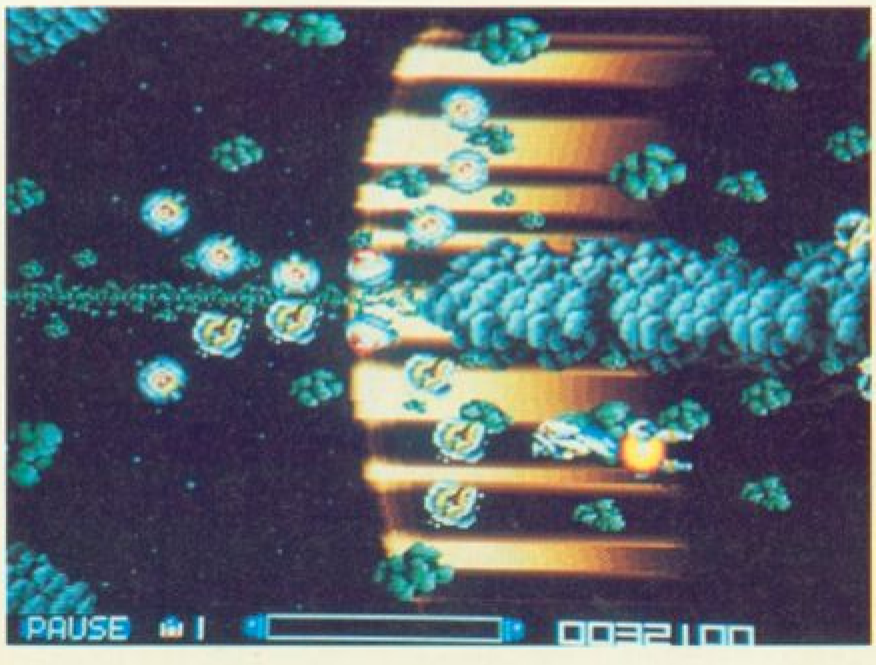
The majority of the game's seven levels are in fact straight out of *R-Type II*, but there are a couple of original worlds - the first one you play, for example, has you blasting through a deadly space minefield. In addition, there are a couple of excellent new power-ups - one that fires a wave of high-energy orbs, and a rather natty cluster bomb that acts like missiles, but explodes violently after a few seconds' flight, taking everything caught in the explosion with it. They're great. A new twist has been added to the Super Beam weapon too - if it's held for too long without firing, it overheats and reverts back to the regular Beam and has to be powered-up again. A nice touch, that.

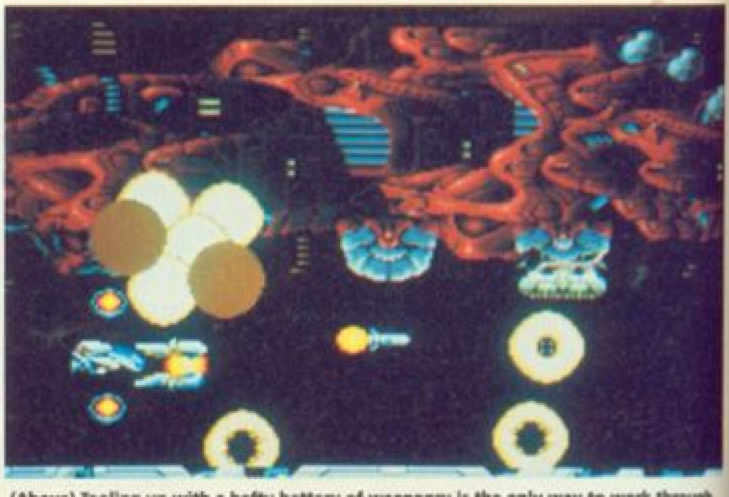
One of the more agreeable new options is a skill level selector that can be set to Kids, Easy, Normal or Hard. The latter level is a real sod, as it not only gets very stingy in the way it doles out power-ups, but it increases the intelligence of the aliens greatly, so they fire not only at your current position, but also at where they anticipate you're going to be in a second or so's time. Very nasty. There's also a rather nice intro sequence that shows the R9 fighter being prepped for combat and blasting off towards the Bydo empire. Completely useless of course, but very nice all the same.

On the minus front, there are a couple of little niggles. For some reason (probably the programmers wanted to prove they know how to use the Famicom's background-scaling technology), the screen fades out and back in again before the confrontation with the end-of-level baddy, and the result looks rather cheap and fragmented. Also, when the going gets tough, the sprites start flickering and slowing down - not much, but enough to detract slightly from the action. This, however, is a small price to pay for the amazing pyrotechnics that are on show here, and the game has a tremendous feeling of chunkiness and weight, so that when the Beam weapon blows something up for example, the visual and aural effect really packs a punch, unlike the rather flimsy 'indoor firework' explosions that 16-bit gamers so often have to put up with.

Hooray then for the first really good shoot-'em-up on the Famicom. It's got everything you could want and more, and comes as a godsend at a time when frustrated Famicom owners were just about to go over the edge through shoot-'em-up deprivation. Go for it!

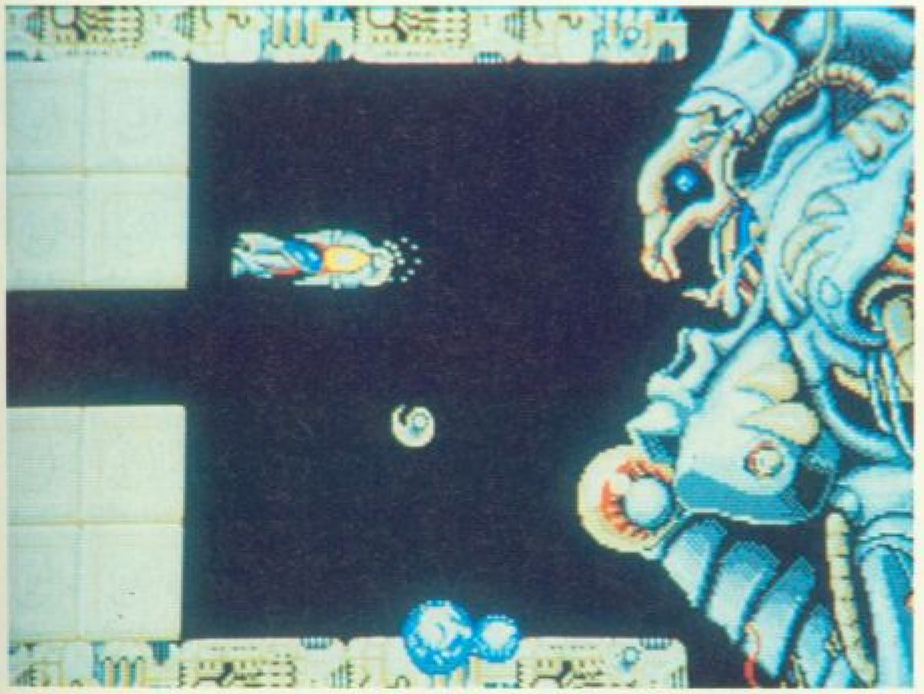
● **Gary Whitta**



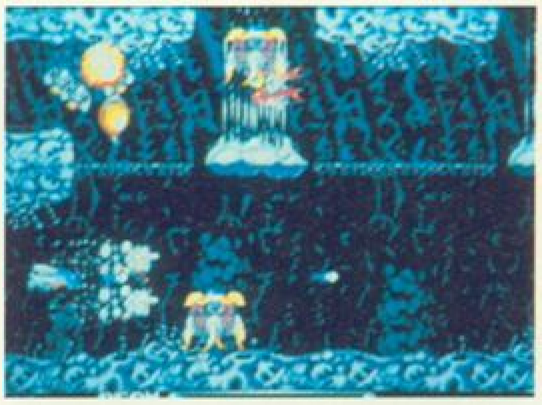


(Above) Tooling up with a hefty battery of weaponry is the only way to work through the stages. Lose a life and you'll be left seriously short of firepower.

(Left) Despite its static appeal, *Super R-Type* is anything but impressive when on the move. The parallax is jerky and ugly and the sprites flicker like there's no tomorrow.



(Left) He's back! The Giger-inspired baddy from the end of the original's first level makes a return guest appearance, but this time with a thick armoured carapace to protect itself.



Lose a life here and you'll find progress without power-ups very tough, what with super-strength jellyfish and homing missiles attacking you.

R-TYPE II

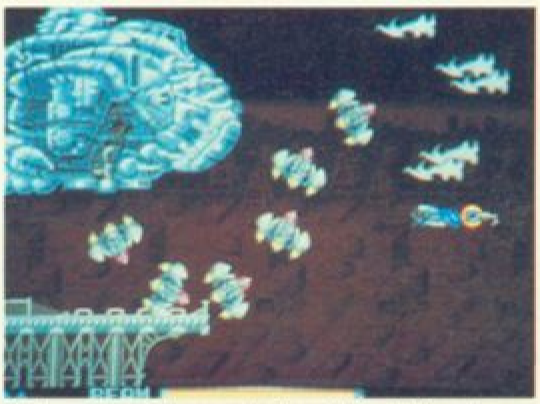
ACTIVISION comes up trumps with its conversion of the sequel to Irem's modern arcade classic

What's going on? Don't tell me that we're forgetting our roots. With the occasional exception of games like *SWIV*, which succeed not by doing anything new, but by sheer brilliance of execution, the poor old arcade blaster has been floundering a bit of late. What makes it worse is that this hideous phenomenon seems to be less because of gamers opting for 'deeper' games, and more due to the sheer lack of inspiration and originality that is spreading like a cancer through the shoot-'em-up genre.

At least the disease has not yet reached America or Japan, as last year's crop of coin-op offerings was as fit and healthy as ever, in particular Irem's top-notch sequel to the game that shook the shoot-'em-up world and spawned more clones than *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* - the sensational *R-Type*. Making the sensible decision not to fool around too much with the original gameplay, *R-Type II*'s designers opted instead to build around the existing framework, adding nastier nasties, designing more torturous landscapes and generally souping the whole thing up into a much meaner, turbocharged GTE version.

For a while, it looked as though problems at Activision might scupper its conversion of *R-Type II* before it was even released, but thanks to French firm The Disc Company stepping in to save the day, all we've had to put up with is a slight delay. But has the wait been worth it?

There's certainly plenty to get you slavering even before you tear off the cellophane. It's been converted by Arc Developments, which has a long and prestigious track record, including pristine jobs on *Forgotten Worlds* and *Crack Down*. And once the action gets started it becomes apparent that - at least in this case - pedigree counts for a lot, as the boys have played a blinder in bringing the sequel to the small screen.



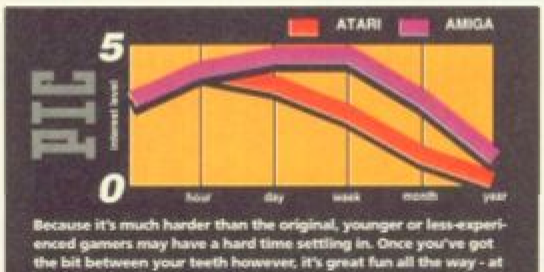
Mind your backs - aliens coming through! It might be a clever move to flip the Force round onto your rear for this section.

The storyline (such as it is) goes thus - years after getting a right old pounding from you in the original *R-Type*, the evil Bydo Empire has been licking its wounds and re-arming its forces in preparation for another attempt to spread its villanous tentacles throughout the galaxy. With a number of peaceful planets already in its grasp, you've been recalled to once again leap into your trusty R9 fighter and hit the Bydo where it hurts before they seize control of the universe. Gosh.

For the most part, the gameplay remains the same and fans of the original with have no problems at all getting back into the saddle. Six (as opposed the original's eight) horizontally-scrolling levels await you, as you battle from left to right through the alien hordes towards the mother alien that awaits at the end of each world. Hardly unfamilar stuff of course, but like *SWIV* it's excellence of execution and not originality that impresses. However, things do start to get slightly dodgy when you begin to realise just how similar the game is to its classic daddy. The bolt-on weapons and power-pods are the same, as are many of the aliens and even some of the level designs create a remarkable feeling of *déja vu*. A nice touch is the new R9's beam weapon. As before, holding down the fire button powers-up your laser into a tremendous bolt of plasma energy that tears through anything in its path. But if you dare to hang on and hold the button down still longer, the beam turns into a Super Beam which, when fired, spreads out across the screen in little blobs, knackering EVERYTHING.

While the age-old line 'fans of the original will be impressed' seems to get dragged out of the cupboard every time a sequel is reviewed, in this case, quite the opposite is true. If you bought the original, you might feel a teensy bit cheated to see that this isn't radically different - at least not enough to justify a £25 outlay. If, however, you're coming into it 'clean', or are enough of an *R-Type* fanatic to not care, *R-Type II* comes unreservedly recommended as the best 16-bit shoot-'em-up since *SWIV*. And that can't be half bad.

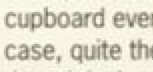
● **Gary Whitta**



Because it's much harder than the original, younger or less-experienced gamers may have a hard time settling in. Once you've got the bit between your teeth however, it's great fun all the way - at least until you complete the thing. Lots of fun while it lasts, but it's questionable as to how long that will be. The ST's less-flashy execution takes some of the edge off the fun.

ACE RATING

820

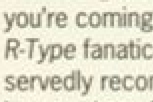


AMIGA

The graphics don't have quite the same 'clean' coin-op look that the original conversion had, but all the same Arc Developments has done an admirable job of squeezing in all those pretty pixels. The music is suitable spacey, and a fine job has been done of getting the coin-op's feel across. Good stuff.

ACE RATING

690



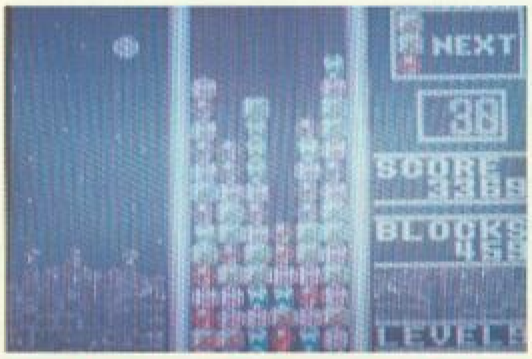
ATARI ST

ST owners are in for an experience considerably less impressive from a technical point of view. Gone are the flashy backdrops, replaced by a so-so starfield, and the music, as performed by the ST's tinnier sound chip, lacks the atmosphere of the Amiga version.

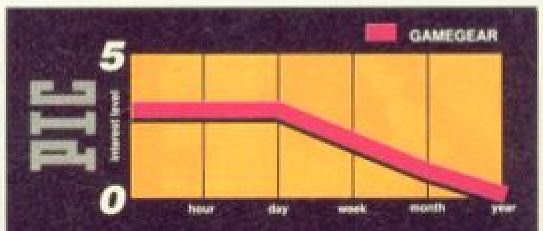
RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£25.99	OUT NOW

THE GEAR



COLUMNS



ACE RATING
680

G	IQ	A	FF
5	3	6	6

GAMEGEAR

Entertaining enough if you haven't tuned your psyche into *Tetris*. Pretty colours show off the Game Gear's appealing screen, but the extra graphics were a bit of a waste of time, being virtually unusable. Somewhat glitchy control can be a frustration if you persevere long enough to make instant reaction a factor.

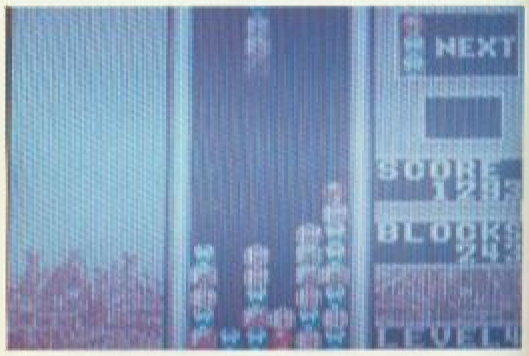
RELEASE DETAILS

GAMEGEAR	£19.99	OUT NOW

Columns, blessed with the exciting challenge of lining up lots of similarly coloured blocks, is now available for the Game Gear. Clearly pitched at *Tetris* fans, this variant on the theme is either a novel twist teaching the player different prioritising abilities or glorified 2D *Snap* - depending on who you listen to.

A narrow strip down the centre of the screen is gradually filled by falling bars. Instead of rotating the bars to make building-block complete lines, the player must cycle through the order of the blocks, endeavouring to place similar colours next to each other. A line of three or more colours - whether diagonal, horizontal of vertical - will disappear, scoring points. Causing previously separate blocks to fall down and form new lines incur extra knock-on points.

For novelty's sake a bunch of extra graphics have been included, enabling the player to opt to try to line up similar fruit/dice/jewels/etc. The size of the screen, however, and the nature of the graphics means that most of these (especially the dice, which are virtually indistinguishable from one another) simply make the game more difficult in the same way that all games are more difficult if you squint or put jam on the screen.



Personally, I have a big problem with *Columns*. Perhaps it's too much *Tetris*, or some cerebral deficiency, but I find it impossible to plan ahead when trying to align colours as opposed to shapes. The result is that instead of building shapes and leaving holes for particular shaped blocks, I end up simply trying to dispose of the current block as swiftly as possible; hardly a winning strategy.

Also, I find it nigh-on impossible to accurately predict the results of knock-on effects, since the colours all tend to fall down and knock out each other in particularly unexpected ways.

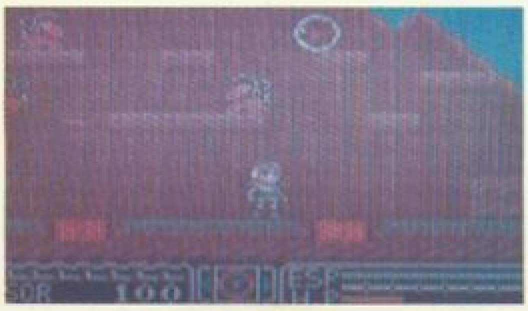
It should be clear, however, that many people find *Columns* particularly satisfying, and there's no doubt that in normal big-block mode the graphics are large and clear enough to make it an ideal Tube journey's worth of fun, if not much more.

● **Jim Douglas**

PSYCHIC WORLD

Cecile's been kidnapped by some nasty creatures - Her sister Lucia needs your help to save her!' Who could refuse such a well-worded and imaginative cry for help? Not me, that's for sure.

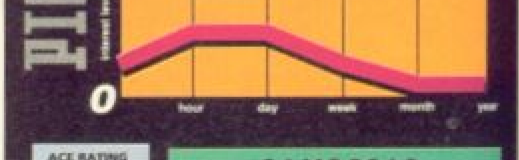
So what do we have here then? A side-scrolling arcade adventure with precious little to recommend it, apart perhaps for its novelty-bag feel.



The Psychic World is, to be sure, a funny old place. It's full of pixies and fairies and funny beasties. The 'nasty creatures' description is actually very accurate, since they're possibly the least appealing collection of bug-eyed miscreants I've seen in quite some time. Neither scarey or interesting, they're quite surprisingly aggravating as they mince around the screen on their little platforms, following their silly attack patterns and sapping your energy.

Dealing with the creatures is simple enough, the majority absorbing a single shot before conking out. There are, of course, the obligatory end-of-stage monsters such as the big triffid which spurts deadly poison all over the screen and tries to trip you up with its roots. Big thrill.

Progress further into the game is rewarded by new-look locations and encounters with wider selections of foolish monsters.



ACE RATING
300

G	IQ	A	FF
4	3	3	2

GAMEGEAR

Amazingly bereft of any addictive qualities what-so-ever, *Psychic World* can be most kindly described as an entertaining five minutes-worth of distraction from the rest of your catalogue of infinitely superior games.

RELEASE DETAILS

GAMEGEAR	£19.99	OUT NOW

Psychic World has about as much character as a shop dummy. It's got all the elements you'd expect to make a decent game but it has absolutely nothing to make it stand out from the (growing) crowd.

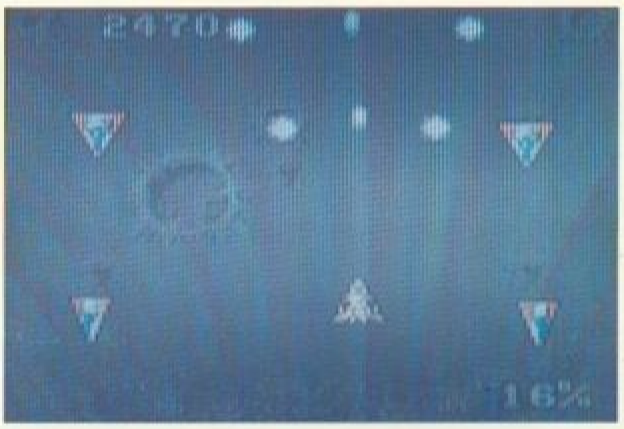
Hardly the best Gamegear title available.

● **Jim Douglas**

HUNTER

A veritable plethora of new Game Gear releases this month, three from Virgin and a rather excellent shoot-'em-up from Japan

HALLEY WARS



Halley Wars, currently only available on import in the UK, deserves mention at this early stage simply because it's probably the best shoot-out the Game Gear has to offer. Carefully designed to show off the machine's sprite handling abilities, *Halley Wars* offers a swift learning-curve of play and plenty of variety.

In the cockpit of the rebel forces' most advanced fighter, the player must fly up the screen, dispatching alien ships and ground installations with his ever-expandable arsenal of weapons.

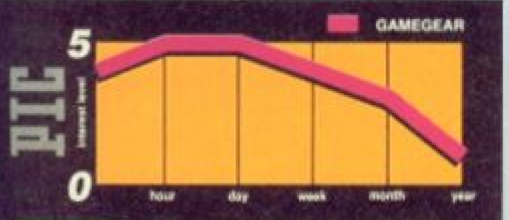
Power-ups are mined from asteroids drifting around the space lanes. Shoot down the asteroids and collect the speed-ups/laser enhancements. Protective force fields and drone pods which fly around behind you can also be earned.

The alien attack waves are simple enough to form recognisable patterns to begin with. A smart piece of design, since losing a ship will result in the loss of your last power-up and when you return to the game. The asteroids at the start of each tricky stage are rich in weapons, so even Continuing with no extras in the later stages doesn't become pointless.

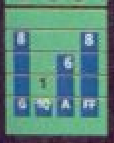
Inevitably, the long-term appeal will wane once completed, but *Halley Wars* still provides enough mindless entertainment for the price.

● **Jim Douglas**

Thanks to Shekhana Consoles (081 889 9412) for loan of this review cartridge.



ACE RATING
780



GAMEGEAR

An above average space blast guaranteed to produce shocking thumb-blisters. Decent-sized graphics and colourful enemy bullets ensure extremely few 'didn't see it coming' scenarios. The aliens fly in interesting enough patterns, too.

RELEASE DETAILS

GAMEGEAR £29.99 OUT NOW (Import)

G-LOC

In the Big Book of Tall Orders, converting *G-Loc* onto a hand-held system scores extremely highly. Unsurprisingly, the Game Gear version bears few similarities to the coin-op, boasting none of the aesthetic appeal of what was basically a graphic-novelty game.

That being the case, *G-Loc* is forced to bat on an incredibly sticky wicket, since even the original could hardly be said to boast anything but the slightest depth.

The player views the war-torn future-world through first person perspective out of the cockpit of his state-of-the-art jet fighter as enemy jets, tanks and warships attack.

Having selected which area of the map the player wishes to fight in, he is briefed as to his mission (Shoot 10 planes, Destroy 5 tanks, etc) and it's off into the blue yonder to do some good.

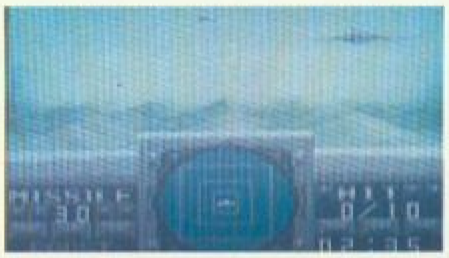
After getting to grips with the controls (particularly easy, except it's a shame that pulling back on the joypad pushes the plane's nose down) it won't be long before the radar starts blinking, warning of enemy forces in the area. If they turn out to be planes, they'll sweep, occasionally behind the player's aircraft and launch a missile attack. Locking on with his own missiles and bullets, the *G-Loc* warrior can return fire, successfully downing enemy planes in satisfying bursts of flame.

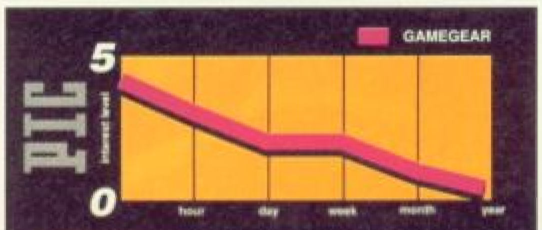
Warships and tanks are somewhat less challenging, behaving more like sitting ducks than their real-life equivalents. These too can be dispatched using missiles or bullets.

And indeed, all of the combat and the flying is decent enough, and entertaining for a few hours, but let's be honest, it's all been seen so many, many times before. And unfortunately the graphics for the ground, instead of being super-detailed and skillful, are rubbishy triangular planes of tedium.

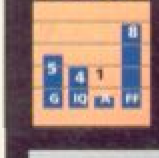
Only *G-Loc* fanatics need apply.

● **Jim Douglas**





ACE RATING
680



GAMEGEAR

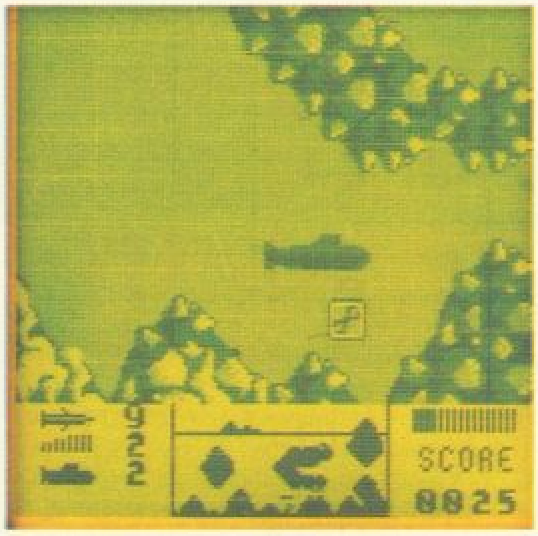
Perfectly average conversion of an impossible (and not even very good) coin-op, boasting neither the graphics or the 'playability' of the original.

RELEASE DETAILS

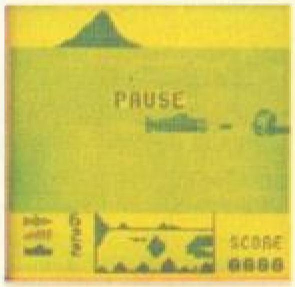
GAMEGEAR £24.99 OUT NOW

let's hear it for THE

A clutch of new titles for Nintendo's miniature marvel reach these shores this month on import. ACE takes a look at six of the best...



(Left) The Red October trapped in a torturous underground cavern - on the positive side that icon below you will repair all damage to the hull. Go for it!



(Right) Things are hotting up near the surface, with an enemy torpedo zooming towards you. Time to activate that cavitation drive...

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

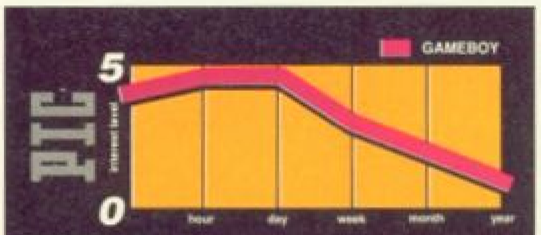
When Tom Clancy's naval techno-thriller was topping the best-seller lists back in the mid-eighties, nobody seemed all that bothered about the computer game potential - strong though it was, book licences just aren't 'sexy' in the minds of licence-dealers. As soon as the film appeared, however, it was a different story. Grandslam was quick to dredge up its original licence and hurry out a lacklustre arcade game to cash in on the movie's record-breaking success, and now it's surfaced on the GameBoy.

As renegade sub commander Marko Ramius, your mission to steal the silent supersub Red October and defect with it to the West is represented by a series of shoot'em-up-style scrolling levels - it's remarkably similar to Grandslam's game, in fact. Steering the sub through the torturous underwater caverns in tough enough, and things are complicated by the assortment of Russian navy craft (including choppers, subs and missile boats) that are out to sink you.

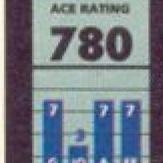
Weaponry comes in the form of straight-firing torpedoes and the more sophisticated homing missiles, which must be collected as you progress. A novel touch is the Cavitation Drive feature - if things get too hot, the sub can be put on silent drive for a few moments, rendering it invisible to enemy ships and torpedoes. There's also an interesting two-player feature, where the second player commands the Russian fleet and tries to sink the October.

It's all very simple stuff, and if you enjoyed the book or movie, you're likely to be left with a bad taste in your mouth, as such a basic arcade game simply doesn't do justice to the weighty subject matter - Heaven knows what Clancy himself thinks. Enjoyable stuff all the same, and difficult enough to keep even the most seasoned GameBoy hacks on their toes.

● Gary Whitta



ACE RATING
780



RED OCTOBER

An atmospheric film-style opening sequence is a welcome feature, although you'll soon be pressing START to skip through it after a couple of viewings. Graphically it's very pretty indeed, and easy to make things out. But be warned - it's VERY difficult indeed.

RELEASE DETAILS

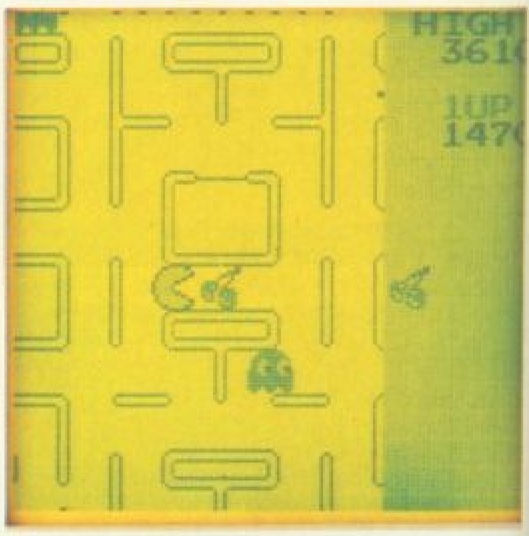
GAMEBOY £29.99 OUT NOW (Import)

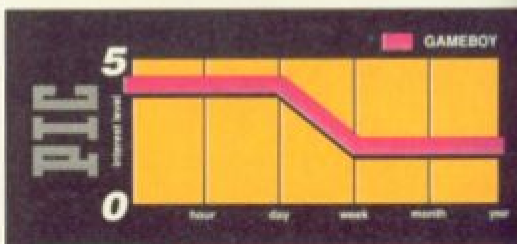
PAC MAN

Ol' yellow guts is back! Yes, the Pac Man comeback tour continues - this time on Gameboy! Only last month the cutesy consumer was caught hiking through PacLand on the Lynx, and this month Namco delve even further into the Pac back-catalogue with this conversion of the timeless original.

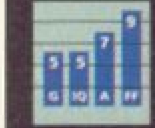
You're probably well aware of the complex - ha! - plot, but for gaming newcomers or those with the memory span of a goldfish, here it is: guide Pac Man around a maze, eating the dots littering the pathways while avoiding four nasty Ghosts. Pac Man isn't defenceless - by eating special Power Pills that reside in the far corners of the maze our plucky yellow (well, light grey here) blob of a hero can turn the tables on his ethereal pursuers and lunch on them for a big bonus.

The game can be played in one of two ways; either full-maze view, or quarter-maze scrolling view. Both methods have problems: the former's small graphics make it hard to tell between deadly and eatable Ghosts, while the latter's restricted window make it hard to plan route strategies (the more serious of the two faults).





ACE RATING
796



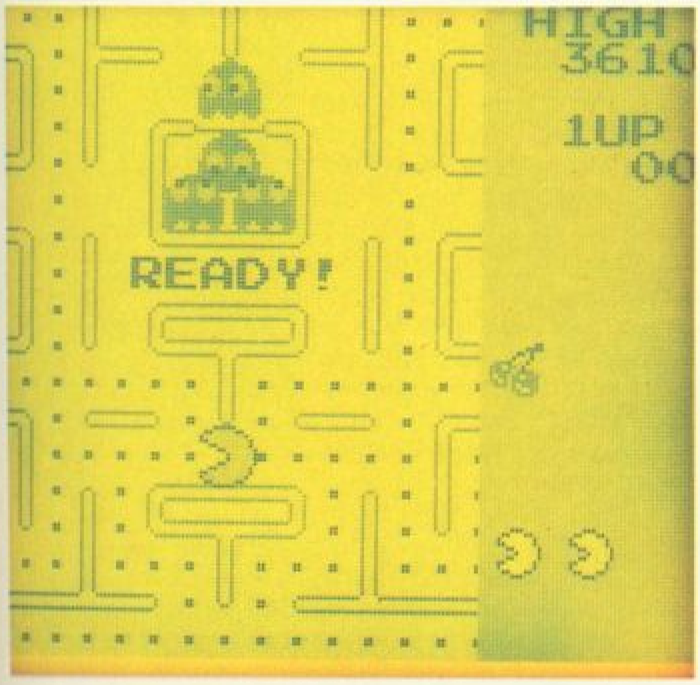
PAC MAN

Ah, the memories! Pac Man's instantly playable and addictive, and it's amazing how all those old playing strategies and tactics come flooding back. The new scrolling display is pretty but useless for serious play. A classy conversion of a classic game, with a superb two-player twist.

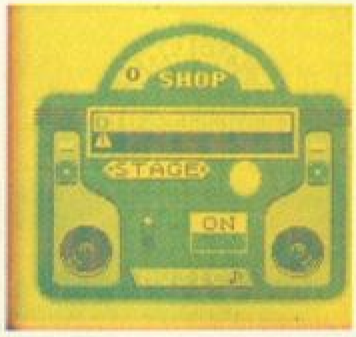
RELEASE DETAILS

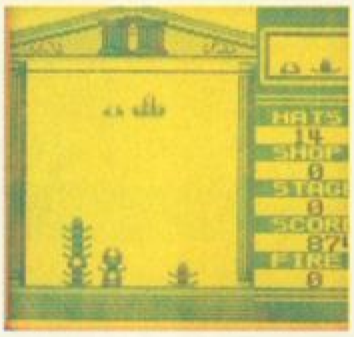
GAMEBOY £29.99 OUT NOW (Import)

BOY!



(Left and above) Oh, Pac Man... why did you ever have to go away? But who cares, because now you're back, and on my favourite handheld too. Superb!





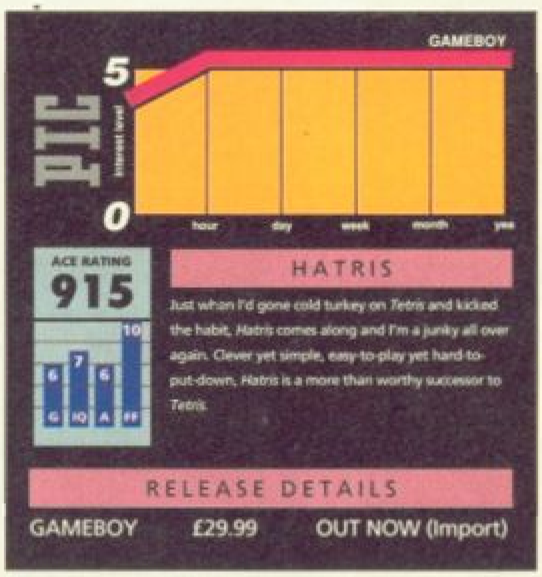
(Left) The *Hatris* option screen takes the form of this state-of-the-art (by Russian standards) tranny.

(Left below) Okay, okay, so *Hatris* doesn't look like much, but then neither did *Tetris!!*

Probably the most exciting thing about this blast from the past is the two-player link-up option. Players compete head to head in a number of 'rounds' and any Ghosts eaten by one player appear in the other player's maze! It's a smashing twist and injects new life into an old theme.

Overall *Pac Man* (the name derives from 'pacu', which means 'eat' in Japanese) has converted well to Nintendo's handheld. All the ghost-evading playing tricks you learnt as a rookie nipper still work, and none of Pac Man's charm has diminished over the years. While some may regret the lack of mazes (there's just the one on offer), most will find this a more than welcome addition to their software library.

● **David Upchurch**



ACE RATING
915

HATRIS

Just when I'd gone cold turkey on *Tetris* and kicked the habit, *Hatris* comes along and I'm a junky all over again. Clever yet simple, easy-to-play yet hard-to-put-down, *Hatris* is a more than worthy successor to *Tetris*.

RELEASE DETAILS

GAMEBOY £29.99 OUT NOW (Import)

HATRIS

You can't keep a good game designer down. Alexey Pajitnov, the designer of *Tetris*, is back! And, in partnership with Vladimir Pokhilko, he's written yet another cunning arcade-puzzler.

Like all good puzzle games, the basic concept is deceptively simple. Pairs of different hats fall down six 'lanes'. By moving the pair left or right and swapping the tumbling hats' position, the player has to try and stack hats of same type. Stack five hats together and they disappear. The longer you survive, the faster the hats fall. If a stack reaches a line at the top of the screen then the game's over.

Score a 'Hatris' by completing two stacks at the same time and the player earns a fireball, which can be fired down a lane to destroy the top hat. Even better, saving up three fireballs rewards the player with a helmet, which crushes all the hats in one lane.

Like *Tetris*, two players can play head to head where completing a stack causes the opponent's 'game over' line to fall slightly. As the game progresses the playing areas get tighter and tighter until eventually one player is forced to lose!

While *Hatris* isn't as immediately 'pick up'-able as *Tetris* or as heart-poundingly fast paced, it doesn't take that long to get a handle on how the game works, and it's just as engrossing and addictive as its illustrious forebear. If you want to get ahead, get *Hatris*!

● **David Upchurch**

CHOPLIFTER II

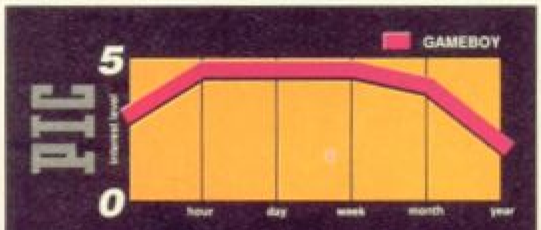
Action-packed hostage rescuing in *Choplifter II*. Every bit as good as the classic original...

Dan Gorlin's classic *Choplifter* first appeared via Broderbund in 1983, and is still a fondly-remembered favourite today. Now there's no need to drag your dusty old 64 and all the ugly wiring out of the cupboard in order to enjoy it - now all you have to do is pop this cart into your slot.

Converting such an old classic to the 'Boy is a hefty task to ask of anyone - but the job has been handled admirably, with only the inevitable differences in graphic scale caused by the physical size of the screen causing gameplay differences. You're cast as a crack helicopter rescue pilot whose job is to extract survivors from a series of war-torn horizontally-scrolling warzones - it's a little like *Defender*, really.

While tanks and fixed artillery take potshots at you, you've got to avoid the fire and land in the correct places to pick up the frantic survivors (sitting still on the ground and waiting for them to get on board can get pretty hairy at times), then ferry them back to base. A level is completed when the required amount of survivors are evacuated successfully.

To add action to the proceedings, you're



ACE RATING

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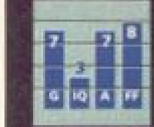


CHOPLIFTER II

A brilliant laugh - and it captures the feel of the original too. There's a great music track, and a handy password system lets you play from where you left off. *Choplifter* fans are hereby ordered to buy this. Everyone else could do a lot worse too.

RELEASE DETAILS

GAMEBOY £29.99 OUT NOW (Import)

armed with a cannon and a limited number of bombs and seeker missiles to drop on ground enemies. To make things more difficult, you've also got top be careful of storm clouds and flying birds, both of which can down your chopper.

Although *Choplifter* looks and feels considerably more claustrophobic than its eight-year-old dad, it's still a damn fine play, with plenty of variety (later levels take you out to sea and into underground caverns). Toughness-wise, it sits just on the fine line between addiction and frustration, but like all the best games never crosses over it. Two big thumbs up for sheer fun value.

● **Gary Whitta**

BUBBLE BOBBLE

Bub and Bob are back! Unfortunately, this latest incarnation of Taito's cutesy two-player classic is nothing to foam at the mouth about - unless it's in frustration. *Bubble Bobble* did the rounds on computer about three years back courtesy of Firebird, and with considerable success on all versions. Here, however, it's a whole different kettle of bananas.

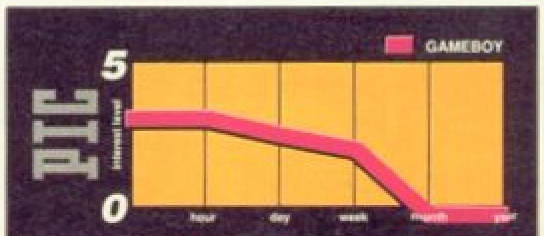
The lack of a two-player option (one of the original's best features and a disastrous omission here) has led to a change in storyline. With Bub sick in bed, his brother Bob has to venture into the cave of monsters and recover the Moon Water, which will make him feel better.

This involves bubbling your way through 99 monster-infested levels. The basic gameplay remains the same - jump about the platforms, trap the monsters inside the bubbles, then burst the bubbles to turn them into yummy fruit. When they're all gone, you can progress. Special bubbles and bonus icons pop up along the way to provide variety.

The biggest problem with *BB* is that the converters, anxious to keep the cutesy graphics recognisable, have done everything to scale which means you can't see the whole play area at once any more - you have to scroll around it. This can lead to frequent disasters and Game Overs which aren't the player's fault because you can't see where the monsters are. Bad idea.

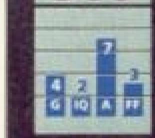
Also, the levels have been completely redesigned to go along with this new display format, and to top it all it doesn't even feel much like the original. Fans of the original may well be pleased (the original music has survived intact), but for everyone else, it's a bit of a duffer really.

● **Gary Whitta**



ACE RATING

510



BUBBLE BOBBLE

Disappointing low-quality conversion of a classic coin-op that does everything wrong. Bub and Bob must be rolling in their graves, or wherever it is they are.

RELEASE DETAILS

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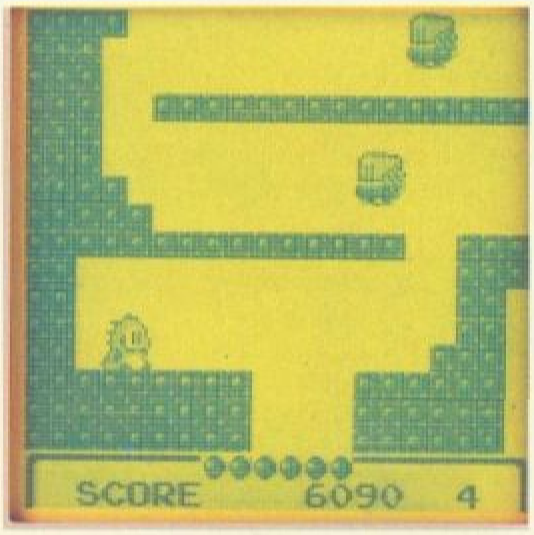
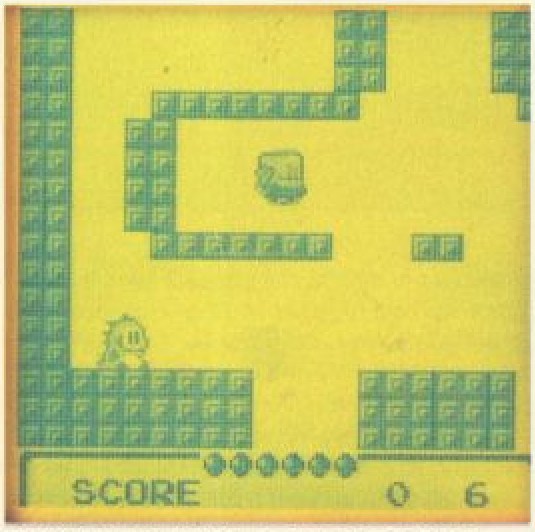
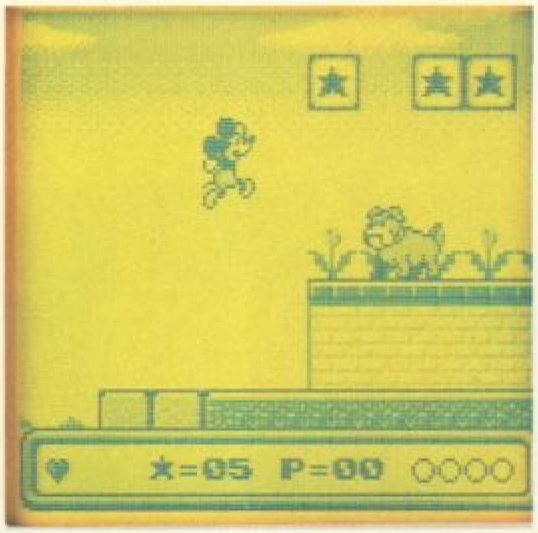
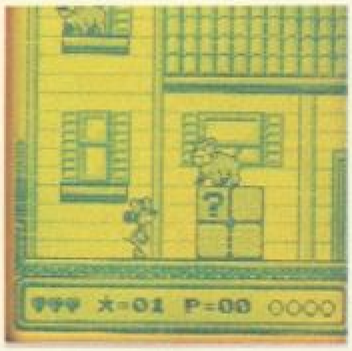




(Above) Plenty of bubble-blowing shenanigans in *Bubble Bobble*. Find a safe spot, as Bub has done here, and you can just trap the nasties as they float past you.

(Left) More unfaithful arcade-style action. Gates at the bottom of the screen act like wraparounds - fall through one and you re-appear at the top of the screen.





(Left) Yet more ammunition for those who would like to ban dangerous dog breeds, as lovable Minnie is threatened by a huge hound.

(Far left) Hurry up, Mickey! Hit the starred blocks for oodles of bonus points and stacks of surprises!

MICKEY'S DANGEROUS CHASE

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. With Mario having toppled Mickey as the most instantly recognisable character in US society, Mickey's obviously trying to regain some street cred in his own platform caper.

The plot is typical Disney, i.e. non-violent and more than a little wet. Mickey has bought a lovely big prezzy for his beloved Minnie (Hip-hip-hooray!), but Big Bad Pete has swiped it (Boo! Hiss!). Taking on the role of either Mickey or Minnie, the player has to chase the villain through five levels of action, each split into three stages.

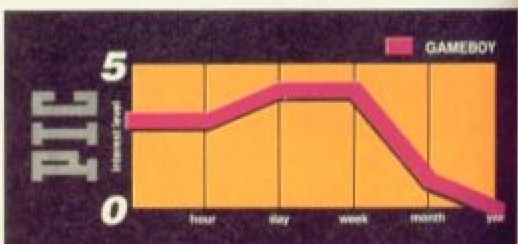
The first two stages are platform based, with Mickey racing over a horizontally-scrolling landscape, jumping across platforms and avoiding the mouse-disliking wildlife (not 'mouse-hating' - nobody in Disney's lovey-dovey world ever 'hates' anything). Mickey can dispatch the almost-nasties by picking up any nearby crate and lobbing it at them. Some special crates also contain various point and health bonuses.

The final stage cranks the game's pace up a notch as Mickey careers around the screen while driving a variety of high-speed vehicles or hanging from some balloons. The aim here is basically to scream from one end of the level to the other avoiding trouble and grabbing goodies.

It's all very 'nice', though the graphics are a bit drab compared to the gorgeous sprites and backdrops seen in *Duck Tales*. It's a bit of a paradox that while the game tasks are simple, the difficulty setting is a little high. This is a pity, because otherwise Mickey would be the perfect game for a younger player.

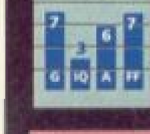
● **David Upchurch**

Thanks to Shekhana Consoles (081 889 9412) for the loan of the cartridges reviewed here.



ACE RATING

745



MICKEY'S CHASE

Nice graphics, though *Duck Tales'* are better. The Mario-esque gameplay is enjoyable but perhaps a little too limited to be really addictive. Fun, but ultimately falling between two stools, being too simple for older players and too hard for youngsters.

RELEASE DETAILS

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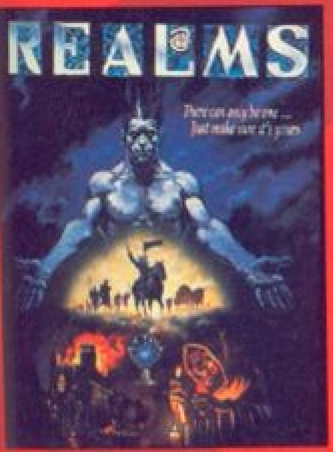
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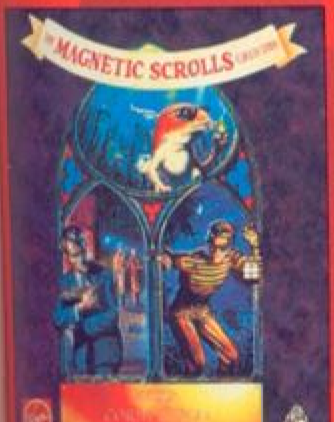
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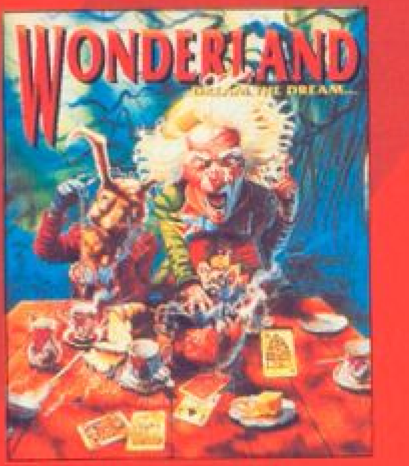
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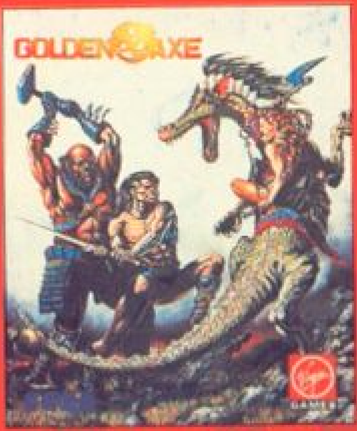
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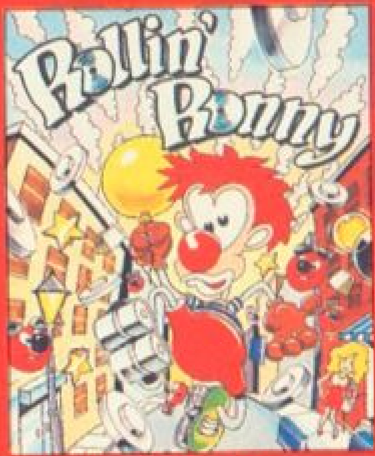
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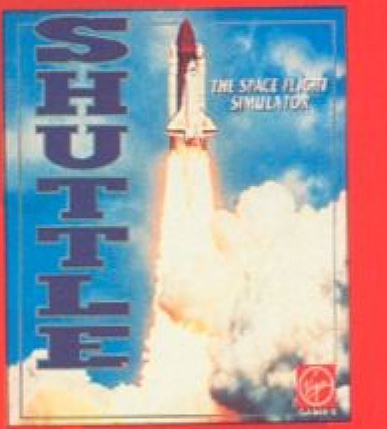
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Tricks 'n' Tactics

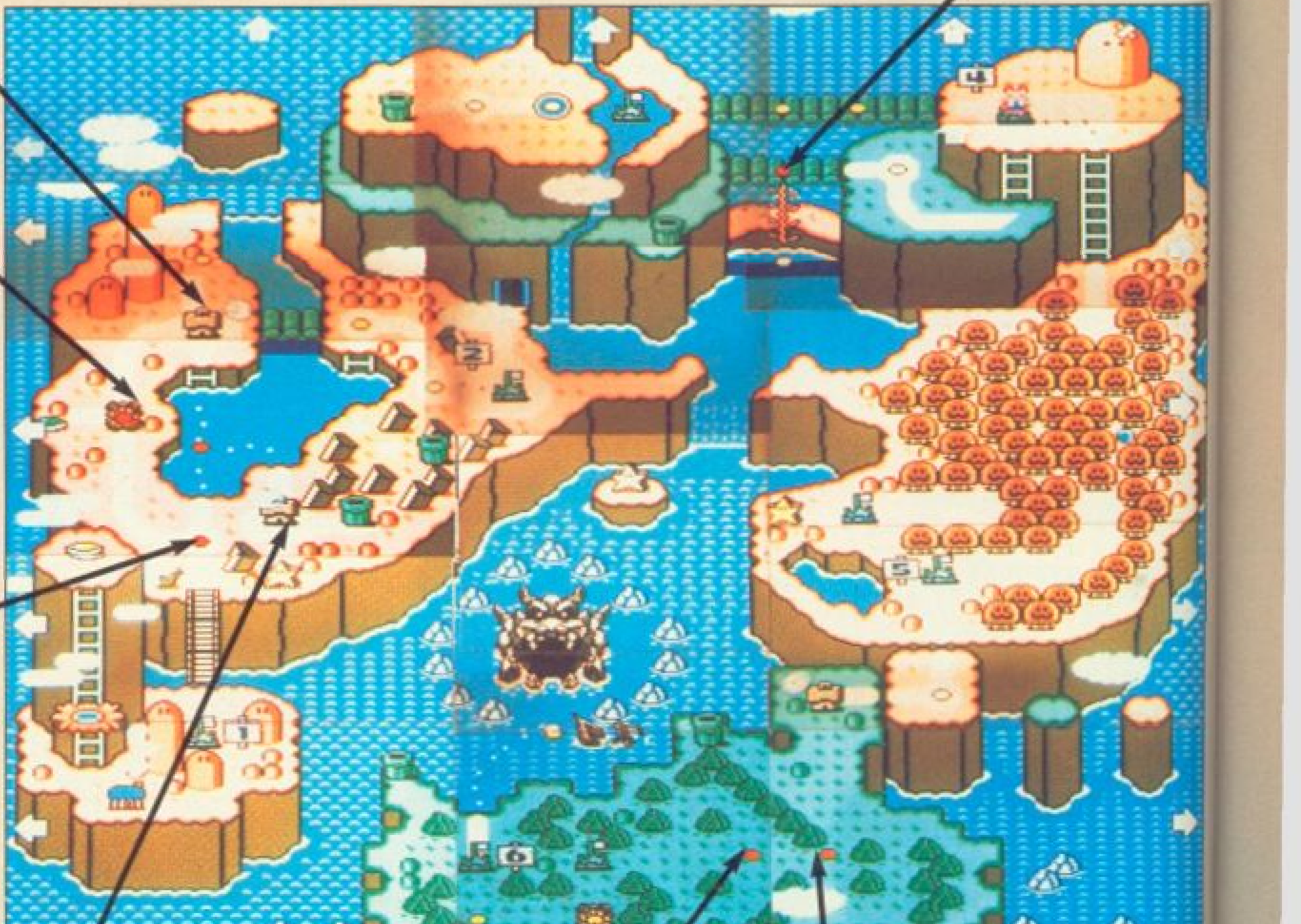
Wot a bumper bundle this month! There's the conclusion to the *Space Quest IV* guide, the *Gods* quest continues, there's the first trip to *Monkey Island, Super Mario World* in full, more *Prince of Persia* hacks and... a secret room found in Megadrive *Strider*. Curiouser and curiouser...

Super Mario World

And after all my hard work, too! There was a bit of a problem with last month's guide around Mario World - there were no arrows showing you which of the locations the tips were referring to! Soooo sorry! This month we're reprinting all last week's tips (all present and correct this time) along with the rest of the undercover areas.

You've got to have a cape to do this level. At the start of the level, run a little way to the right then run back left and take off. You should find a platform floating in the sky. Run along it and drop off the end to find four blocks containing extra lives and a secret exit.

A real pain, this one! The trick is to get the cape and fly over the buzzsaws. Once past them, swoop down under the end gate and then pull up so that you don't fly off the bottom of the screen. Continue flying right to find a second gate. Spooky!



One of the green pipes in the ceiling leads to a secret room. Inside you *should find four yellow blocks forming* some steps and an empty shell trapped under some more blocks. Spin onto the blocks and get the shell. Get the shell and throw it straight up into the air so that it hits the top block in the steps. A vine will grow, which you can climb to reach a key and keyhole leading to the green pod room level.

Right at the end of the level, just before the end gate, there's a key and a keyhole on a pipe platform high in the sky. If you're clever you can grab a cape and fly across the level to reach them, but it's easier to find the green pod room first, then come back here and run up the newly-formed wall.

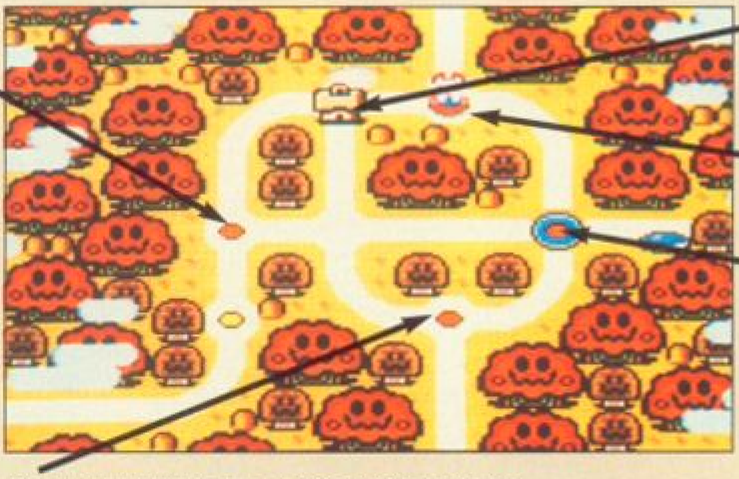
You'll have no doubt found the pod that makes the exit door appear. BUT! If you hit the yellow block right above the newly-formed door, a vine will grow that'll take you to a teleportation star... after you've fought a fearsome ghost.

Pretty easy. Just get the cape and fly under the end gate to find a second gate.

Bit of an admission to make here - we don't quite understand how we did this one. If you keep replaying it you should eventually find two exits, one to take you to the next location on the left and one that takes you to the pipe to the north.

IN THE WOODS...

Just past the half-way point you'll find a valley with a blue pipe on a platform floating just above it. Using a cape to help slow your fall, jump onto the platform and go down the blue pipe to find a key room.



You should have no trouble making your way to the yellow exit door, but if you run on a bit further left you'll find a second exit.

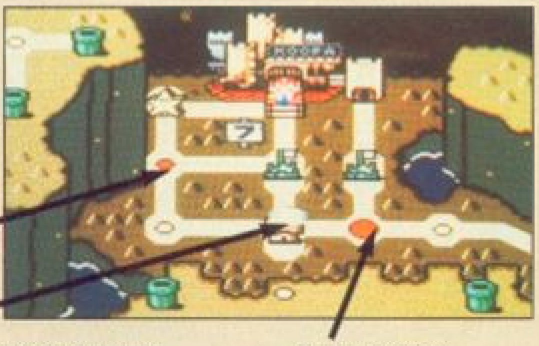
No help here. Just use your eyes...

As you swim near to the end of the level, you should see a yellow block at the bottom left of the screen. To the left of this is a strange-looking wall. Just run straight into it to find a key room.

On your travels you'll find an area dotted with lots of haphazardly-placed yellow blocks. Eventually you'll come to two American footballers. Just past these, go down the green pipe to find a secret key room.

INSIDE THE ROCK DRAGON'S MOUTH...

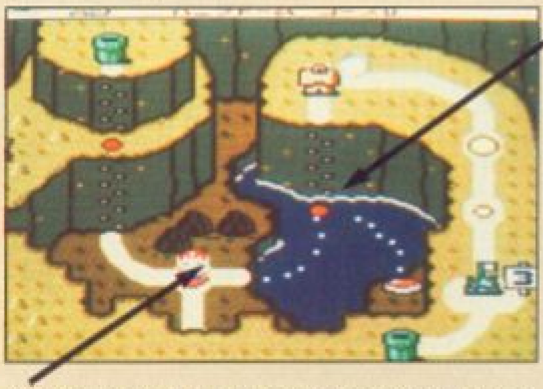
You've got to be pretty good to do this one. Somehow you've got to get dino to the end of the level so that he can eat the key. You can probably work out the rest...



Speed is essential here. On the second stage of the level, go right and run down the tunnel of coins to the last door. Enter to find a pod. Pick it up and carry it right as far as possible. Then, jump up through the floor and continue right. You should find a yellow block and a door. Drop the pod and hit the block. Guide the coin trail up off the top the screen so that they form some steps. Now hit the pod (this will turn the coins to blocks). Climb up the steps to find a key room. Bear in mind that you have to be small Mario to get in!

On the third stage you should be in an area where the parts of the floor try to crush you. Run to the right-hand edge of the first such area you come to. Jump up off the top of the screen and move left. You should find yourself on an off-screen platform. Run left to find a key room.

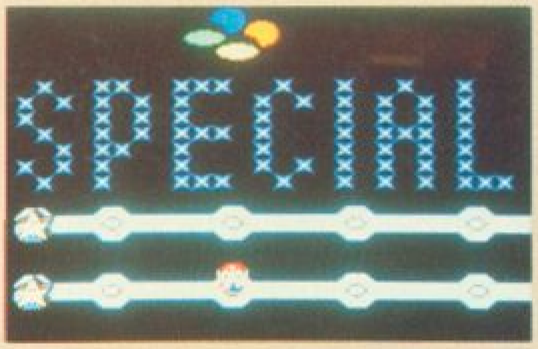
UNDER THE MOUNTAIN...



On your travels you should come across a pod on top of a huge pile of yellow blocks. Pick it up and carry it left onto solid ground, then pop it. Run left and go down the shaft that was formerly blocked. You should find a key and a keyhole.

You've got to have been to the red pod room to find the secret exit. If you have it's very easy, so I'll leave you to work it out.

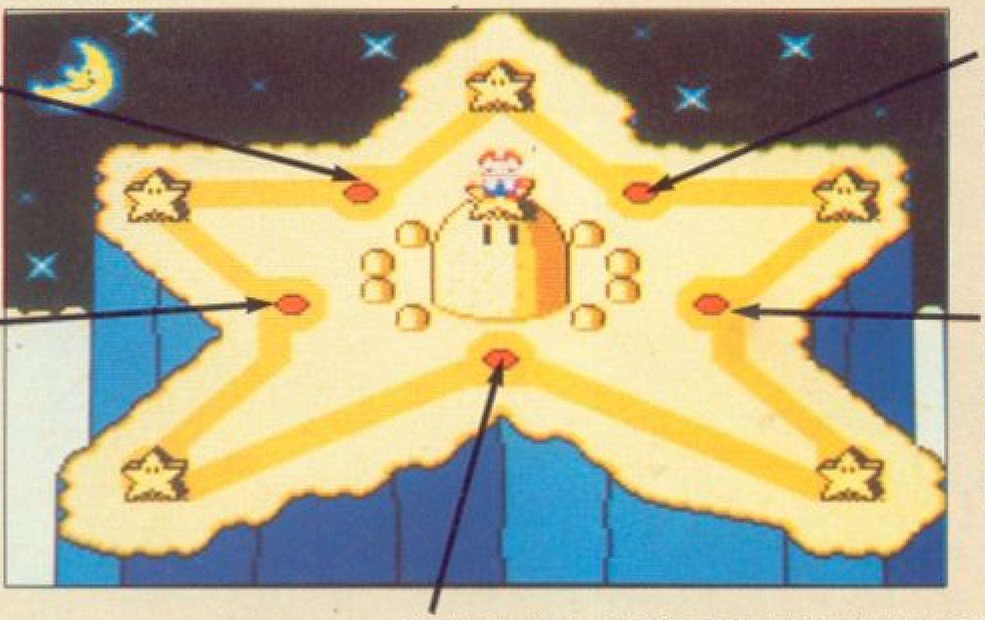
SECRET ISLAND



STAR ISLAND

Rather than enter the green pipe at the end of the level, swim along the passageway at the bottom of the screen to find a key room.

Go to the far right of the screen, and spin to smash down through the blocks and discover a key room.



Throw a block into the air to knock the bomber off the cloud. Now commandeer the cloud and fly it upwards to find a key room.

Half-way along the level you should find a grey rock platform. Underneath is a key room. If you've found the green and red pod rooms you should have no problems here.

And how do you get to the teleport star at the centre of the island? Sorry, not going to tell you. We can't spoil everything, can we? But here's a hint: it's got something to do with a cape, a pod and a yellow block... Solve it, and you can take a trip to Secret Land.

☞

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The Secret Of Monkey Island

Lucasfilm seem to do no wrong with their graphic adventures, and this latest in the series is a fine example of their craft. Here's John Bolt of Angus in Scotland with the first part of the complete solution...

GETTING STARTED

Look at the nearby poster, then walk right and enter the Scumm Bar. Once inside, talk to the fat pirate beside the door and then to the pirate in black at the table, namely about the Governor and LeChuck. Go to the next room and start a conversation about wanting to be a pirate with the important-looking pirates. Find out more about the three trials and then bid them farewell.

Wait until the cook leaves the kitchen and has gone to the first room, then sneak into the kitchen. Put the joint of meat in the pot o' stew, then remove the stewed meat. Take the pot under the table that the meat was on.

Open the door to the dock and a gull will fly down and start eating some fish. Walk to the right of the bird, then step on the plank the bird's resting on. Repeat this process until the you grab the fish while the bird is in mid-flight. Once you have the meat, fish and pot, leave the village and access the map of the island.

Travel to the clearing and enter the circus tent. Wait until you interrupt the Fetuccini Bros squabbles, then when asked to perform their exciting feat, ask how much it's worth. Agree to the offer of 478 pieces of eight and when asked if you have a safety helmet, say yes and show them the pot. Perform the stunt and stagger back to town.

Go to the citizen of Melee and buy the map. If you want you can also get two pieces of eight and some minutes from the pirates nearby. Visit the jail and check out the odious prisoner, then go to the store and buy the sword, the shovel and the breath mints. Examine the voice from the alley and feel free to insult the Sheriff. Go back to the jail and start a conversation with the prisoner, after toning down his breath with the mints. Visit the voodoo lady, making sure to get the rubber chicken on the table. You are now ready to face your trials...

TRIAL 1: MASTERY OF THE SWORD

Go to the house in the south-east. When stopped by the Troll, ask about the toll and give him the fish (actually a red herring). Once at the house, read the sign and knock on the door. Protest that you do have "what it takes" until Captain Smirk does agree to train you. Pay him the thirty pieces of eight.

After you've been trained, wait on one of the roads until a pirate crosses your path and provoke a fight. You'll almost certainly lose the first few fights, but you'll remember the good abuse for later! Always use any new insults until someone uses the correct counter-insult - these are necessary to win the battle with the Sword Master. Once you've defeated at least three people you're ready to fight the Master.

Enter the forest and search for a location with a sign beside an unbridged ravine. Pull the sign and a secret bridge appears. Go across and challenge the Sword Master (for it is she) to a fight. Although she uses different insults you should by now have correct retorts for each.

When you win, take the T-shirt and leave. If you are beaten, do not return to the forest again (unless you're particularly masochistic), as once you've discovered the secret house you can to it on the map (it's the point of light inside the forest, away from any tracks).

TRIAL 2: TREASURE HUNTING

Re-enter the forest and consult the map. The dance steps correspond to directions in the forest, with back meaning backwards into the screen. At one point you should encounter a plant with bright yellow flowers - remove one of its petals for later use. Once you have found the treasure site, read the plaque and marker, then dig up the marked ground. Collect the "treasure" and return to the Scumm Inn to brag of your success.

TRIAL 3: THIEVERY

Go the Governor's mansion, and use the yellow petal with the meat. Feed the dogs the drugged meat and enter the house. Pilfer the Ming vase and enter the door beside the entrance. After the lengthy scene that ensues, return to the jail and trade Otis the gopher repellent for his carrot cake. Open the cake and find the file. Return to the mansion and leap through the wall once more and rejoin the fray. When apprehended by the Sheriff, claim that the idol was given to you by the Governor.

Thrill the Governor with your eloquence then leave the mansion, remembering to take the vase as you leave. Use this opportunity to insult Fester, as everything you say results in you being dropped in the sea, along with the idol. Hang around (after all, Guybrush claims to be able to hold his breath for ten minutes) until hope of salvation comes (and goes), then pick up the idol and make good your escape.

That's all for now. More fun with the scurvy knaves next month!

Talk to pirate
Walk to
Pick up
Talk to
Give
Use
Look at
Turn on
Turn off
minutes
fish
hunk of meat
map
sword

Space Quest XII - Vohaul's Revenge II
HALT
SP-DISPATCH

Space Quest IV

The madness continues in this, the second half of ACE's complete solution to Sierra's fun-tastic graphic adventure. Once again, warm thanks to Dave Driesen from Antwerp in Belgium for all his hard gaming. Remember - the term 'clicking' means clicking with the hand cursor unless otherwise stated.

PART 3: SPACE QUEST 1 - THE SARIEN ENCOUNTER

You appear next to the Droids-R-Us shop at Ulence Flats. Go south and enter the bar. Walk up to the monochrome guys at the bar. Once you are thrown outside, get your revenge by vandalising the nearby sand bikes. Do this by clicking on the bikes. After the animation sequence you'll find yourself at Tiny's Used Spacecraft shop.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If at any time you hear a whining sound approaching, stand still until a bike flashes by, and when it does, click the walk cursor anywhere on the screen.

Go east and enter the bar again. Walk up to the bartender and take the book of matches from the left corner of the bar. Now, go back to your time pod and click on it. Type in the co-ordinates that were on the display the very first time you entered the timepod (i.e. at the supercomputer's landing bay).

PART 4: SPACE QUEST 12 - VOHAUL'S REVENGE 2

After arriving at the supercomputer, walk all the way east and click the jar of blob cursor on the door lock. After passing it, call up the inventory screen and click the book of matches cursor on the cigar. Click [OK] to get back into the game. Now that you can see the laser beams, click on the device in the eastern wall and enter the numbers 160, 30 and 110 to get all the lasers vertical. Click [X] to leave the keypad and walk through the lasers.

(You'll find the next bit easier to understand if you refer to the map.)

Walk all the way north and take the last turn left. Now take the first left turn you come to and save the game. In the middle of the screen you should see a pillar. Wait a while and walk around it (i.e walk north at the left side of the pillar). Then walk off the screen to the right - you should find yourself at the first screen.

Take the other way out of the left side of the screen (the path in the middle left of the screen) and follow it all the way west. When you arrive in the strange room inside the supercomputer, click on the door. Now enter this set of numbers: 6 9 6 5 8 4 7 6 6 9. The door should open.

☞

☞ Enter the programming room and you will find an icon-driven user interface. First you must turn off the guard droid system by putting the droid icon in the toilet and then format the system by putting the brain in the toilet. Icons are selected by clicking on them. Don't put the SQIV icon in the toilet or you'll return to DOS. Instead follow the directions on the map to find your kidnapped son.

Eventually you should come across Vohaul himself. Fight him (it's pretty easy, but stay away from the edges just to be on the safe side). Once you've defeated him click on the ladder going down. When Roger returns, select the 3.5" floppy from your inventory and click its icon on the disc drive next to the beam. Load up the program on the disc and the one from the beam. Select [Roger Jr] and push [beam download] to complete the game!

Gods

I feel so stoopid! You may remember that last month I asked you how to get the gems on World 3. Well, Christopher Bromilow from Skelmersdale and David Appleford from Milton Keynes reveal that you simply get to where the Stone Gargoyles are, then go left and then when you get to the third platform jump into space. With luck you should land on the moving platform. Then jump onto the platform with the gems above it. As if by magic the ledge will disappear and the gems will drop down.

Your quest continues here, with the guide to Level 2 of the Bitmap Bros' wondrous arcade adventure. No more a-do, let's get on with it...

LEVEL 2

(As last month, 'throw a switch' means pull it down or push it up - depending on its current position - while 'toggle a switch' means pull it down and then push it back up again.)

IN THE SHOP

Stay with the throwing stars and fireballs, and use your cash to up their power.

WORLD 1

Make sure you push the pressure pad to the right of the start position. Go left and down a little. Kill the monsters firing at you across the gap, then jump across to pick up a gold key. Continue going down, then right.

You should find yourself near a door and a shield guarded by some spikes. A thief will appear. Don't kill him - let him get the shield then drop the key to attract him. Kill the thief, pick up the key and use the shield to get through the spikes. Throw the door switch. An out-of-reach key and a thief will appear. Position yourself in front of the door, then - just before the thief touches you - enter.

You'll be transported to a new room. Grab everything and drop down the shaft. At the bottom, take advantage of your shield by pressing the nearby pressure pad and killing any local bad guys. Drop all your items, then go right to where the thief was. Wait for him to get the key. Go and pick up your previously dropped items then return. The thief will approach you. Kill him and get the key.

The rest of the level's pretty straightforward. You've just got to find the ice gem, water gem and fire gem and take them individually to the gem room (in that order) so that you can reach the World key. The ice gem is in the room at the top of a ladder by a treasure chest. The other two gems are found by killing baddies.

But there's a quicker way to get the World key. Take the ice gem to the gem room so that the key platform drops a little. Then toggle the door switch a couple of times to drop the teleport gem - this takes you to a bonus room. If you complete it properly you'll find a jump potion which you can use to jump up to the World key. Simple, when you know how.

WORLD 2

Jump onto the ladders you first come across to climb to a ledge with a chalice on it. DON'T fall off - if the drop doesn't kill you the spikes at the bottom will. Throw the switch, then climb down the ladder and drop off the bottom. Go down the ladder to your right to collect a key.

Go back up the ladder and go right. You should come across three switches above two trapdoors. Throw the switch above the left trapdoor and then the switch above the right trapdoor. Drop down the now opened right trapdoor to find another chalice.

Make your way back up and go right. You should come across a golden teleport key. Return left and go down the pit of switches and trapdoors. At the bottom go through the door to your right to be teleported to the door to the ship room. Pick up the third and last chalice and go through the door to enter the ship room. Pick up the two keys and drop all your chalices before leaving.

Go left and down the ladder. Kill the monster on the platform to your right - a teleport crystal should appear. Use it to reach the treasure room. Now make your way to the World door...

IN THE SHOP

Buy as many spears as possible.

WORLD 3

Having got the door key, throw the switch to the right of the door, then the switch to the left, then the switch to the right again - this should reveal a secret corridor. (Incidentally, has any-

one found a way to open this door?)

Down the corridor are four doors. Enter the second one you come to to find a skull. Take this to the room behind the last door to be rewarded with a piece of mosaic and a bottle of herbs. Take the herbs to the third room to find another mosaic fragment and a globe. Take the globe to the first room to get the third and final mosaic piece. Your reward for your restoration work is a teleport to a new dungeon area.

Go left, killing all the monsters as you go. Eventually some will drop a key. Go back right and throw the first switch on the level - a platform will appear letting you reach a secret chamber containing another key. Go back down then left to open a passage down to another secret room. Throw the switch in this room.

Go up and left to find some trapdoors and switches making steps to an upper platform. As you jump up the steps, toggle all the switches you come across. Get the candlestick at the top-right and the key at the top-left of this area, then drop through the trapdoor in the upper platform. Go back right to the treasure room.

Return left and go down. Get the cross at the far left (just past the spikes). The rest of this level is fairly straight-forward (though goodness knows where the treasure key is). Remember to take the cross to the chapel for a big crystal reward. This will come in very handy against...

THE DRAGON

Drop the crystal to the left of the screen and stand between it and the dragon. The monster will aim its fire at the crystal leaving you free to blast away, just crouching now and again to avoid the fireballs from its tail.

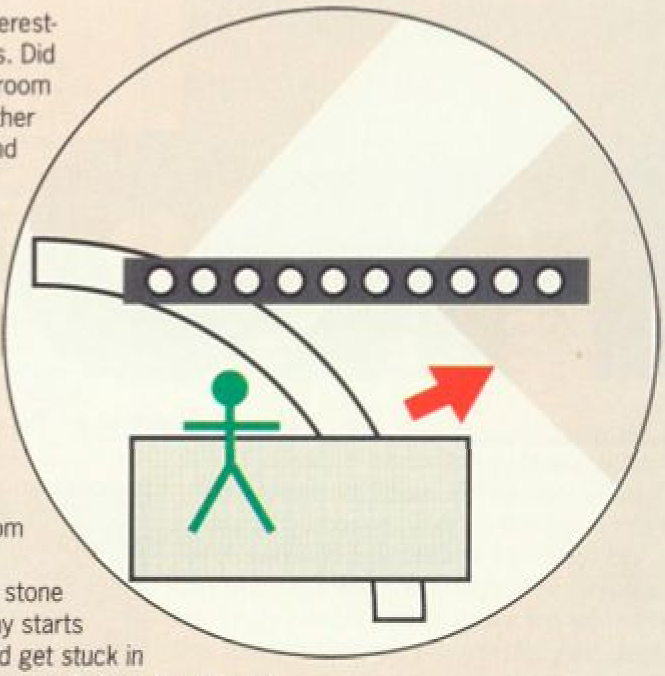
So far, so tough, but your quest is only half over. Get ready for Level 3 - next month!

Strider

Not really a cheat this, but an interesting little featurette none-the-less. Did you know that there's a secret room on the second level? Nope? Well, neither did I, but here to show use how to find it is D. Wyman of Edgware in Middlesex.

Know the beginning of the level, with the wolves and the giant robot gorilla? Well, once past these perils you should find yourself riding on some rotating platforms and under attack bu guards and what not. Normally you exit this section by jumping up a small sloping passageway to climb above ground (where you'll meet the phantom fighter).

Instead of doing this, jump into the stone wall just below where the passageway starts (as shown in the diagram). You should get stuck in the rocks and forced into the secret room. Ooh, scary. Kill the phantom fighter then go right to continue.



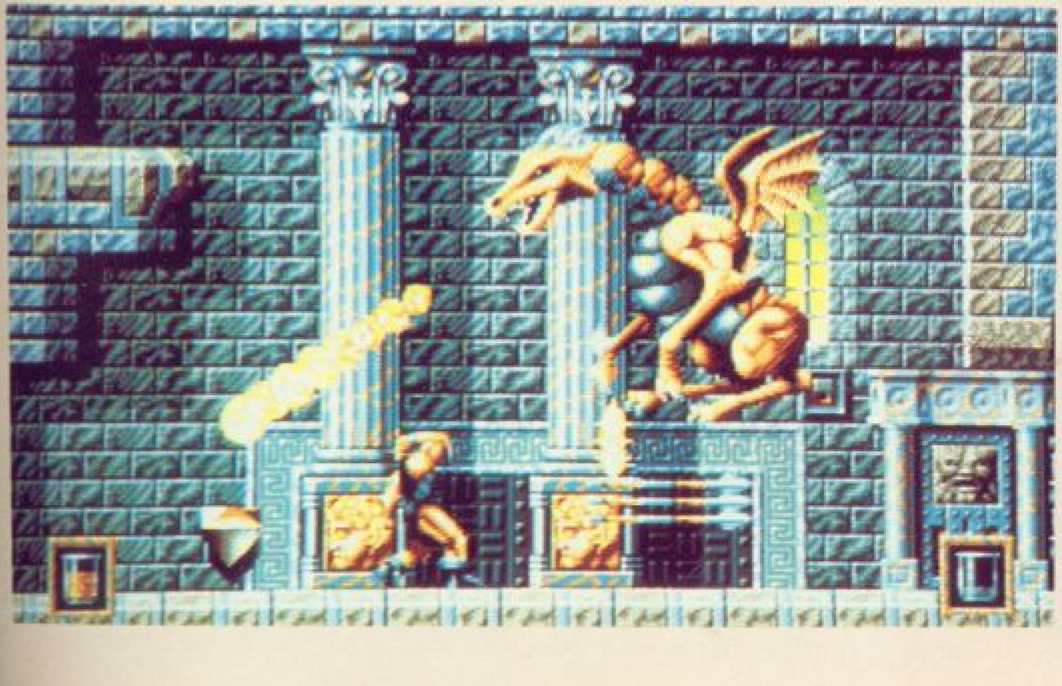
(Actually, I have an admission to make: after many goes I couldn't get into this supposed secret room. But then I'm not the World's best *Strider* player - although I do try! Perhaps you'll have more luck? If you do find it, please write in.)

Prince Of Persia

Some time ago we printed a PC cheat to this, allowing you to kill any enemy swordsmen at the tap of a button. Well, it appears that this is just half the story. Both Dan Flett from Australia and Roddy MacLeary from Fife, Scotland have written in with lots of extra secrets.

As before, load the game from DOS by typing 'PRINCE MEGAHIT'. Then press the following keys during play for the required effects:

K	Kills any swordsmen instantly. WARNING! Don't use on skeletons.
U	View screen above.
N	View screen below.
H	View screen to the left.
J	View screen to the right.
SHIFT-T	Extra damage point.
SHIFT-I	Flips screen.
SHIFT-L	Advance one level.
SHIFT-W	Makes you light as a feather (no damage falling off ledges).
SHIFT-B	Blacks out non-animated objects (very useful!).



GAME PAUSED

GAME PAUSED

THE *New* ORIGINALS

FROGGER

By Peter Molyneux out of Bullfrog

How would today's developers revamp their own favourite classics? ACE asks that very question in the first of an occasional series.

It does sound like a bit of a wind-up, doesn't it? *Frogger* by Bullfrog? To be honest it wasn't Molyneux's first choice. When first approached with the idea, he instantly chose Ultimate's classic *Knight Lore*. Then deciding that wasn't such a good idea, he spent a day in deep contemplation before deciding "I want to do that caterpillar one. You know, *Centipede*." Then, while explaining why his *Centipede* would be so good, he threw in one final twist as the *Frogger* brainwave hit him. And that was that.

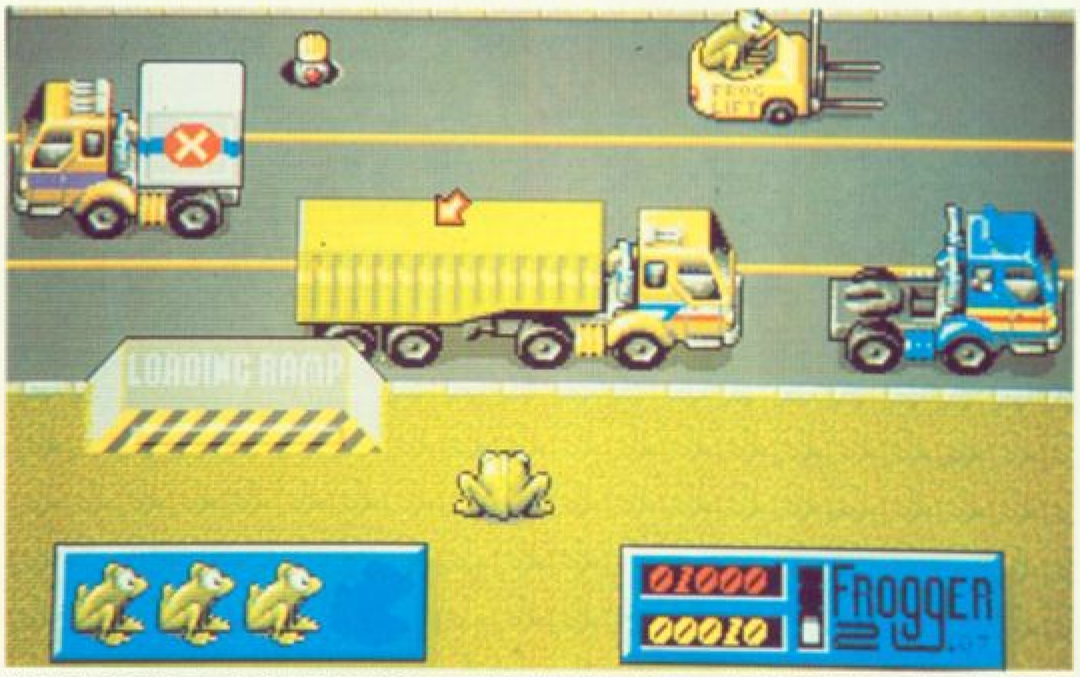
Fortunately, it all fits in rather nicely, and there's more behind it than the rather tenuous similarity between the two names. Not only is it genuinely one of Pete's old faves, but not too long ago Bullfrog actually wrote its own version of the classic coin-op. "When doing *PowerMonger*, we were worried that the player might get bored while waiting for the game to load," Peter explains. "So we wrote *Bullfrogger*, which was basically a slightly tarted-up version of the original *Frogger* that you could play while waiting. We got it finished and playable and everything."

However, it was at that point Bullfrog realised that were they to release such a game, even within another game, the chaps at Sega would be quite anxious to talk to them, using words like 'copyright', 'solicitor' and 'twenty years hard labour', and so it was shelved. Now the game's got a new lease of life - at least hypothetically - thanks to Molyneux's New Originals treatment.

"I think one of the reasons I chose *Frogger* is because it's an old classics that was very popular in the early days, but never got updated," explains Peter. "*Asteroids* became *Blasteroids*, *Breakout* became *Arkanoid*, but nothing ever came of *Frogger*. Which I think is a shame because *Frogger* was the first ever game to have a cute character - something that's been very popular recently. The other thing I liked was that it had a down-to-earth theme. While all the other games had space mutants, here you had a frog trying to cross a road and a river."

Peter believes that *Frogger* has plenty of potential for enhancement using today's more sophisticated technologies and gameplay philosophies. "Purely from a technical point of view, there are all sorts of things you could do. The graphics would obviously be very important, and with the right use of colour and animation you could create a really nice wet and slippery feel that would be just right for *Frogger*. Yes, plenty of moistness."

According to Pete, the most useful application of any enhanced graphics would be to bring the



This is how Peter Molyneux's 1991 version of *Frogger* would look, in this artist's impression by Bullfrog's graphics wizard Paul McLaughlin. Notice how Mr Frog, in his new 32-colour incarnation is a much cuter character than the original - an important point in Peter's book. The infamous road, however, is as dangerous as it ever was, and now comes with extra features - note the manhole man.

LEVEL BEST

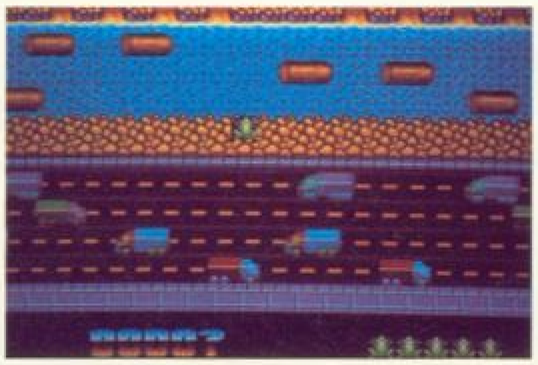
So how long are the levels going to be then? "Oh, there'd be just one... of infinite length," says Peter. You WHAT?! "The problem with games with a definite end is that when you've completed it, you don't want to play again. So in this game there wouldn't be an end as such - the objective would just be to get as far as possible. Every three screens or so you'd have a continue point that would allow you to restart from there if you die.

"The way it works is like the little holes you have to jump into at the end of a normal Frogger screen. You have, say, five tunnels or lillypads, but only some of them will be continue points. There'll be a little clue as to what ones they are just before you get there, like two eyes inside the right tunnels that blink just for a moment. If you jump into the right tunnel, you're given a password.

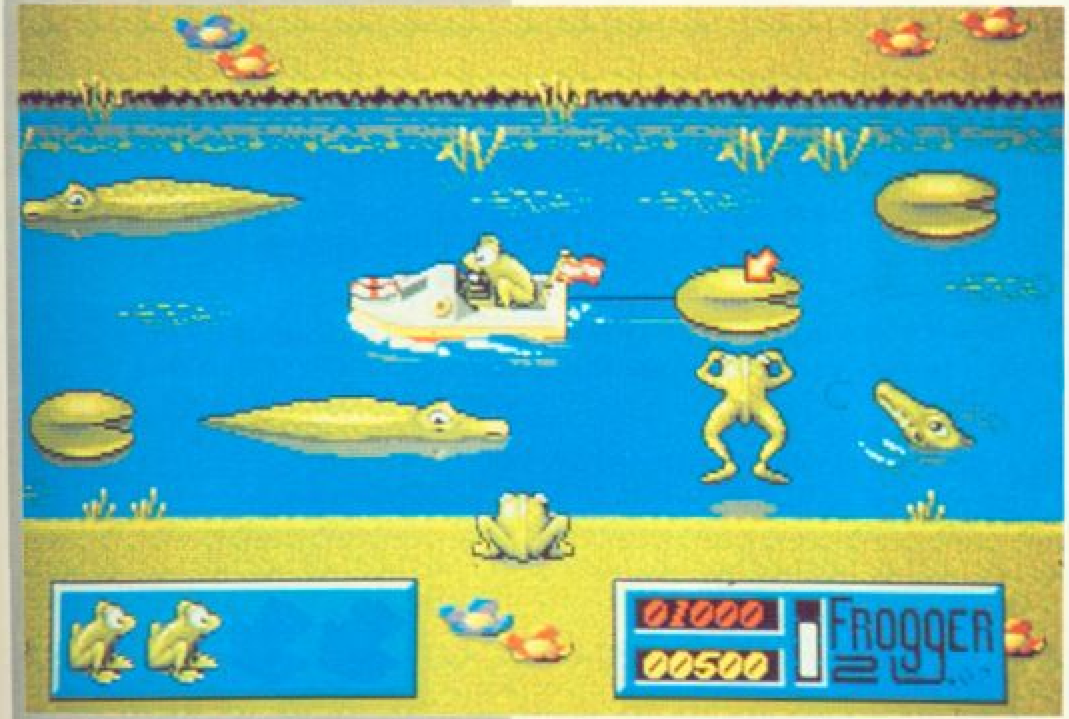
"This password would actually contain the information that the program uses to set up a level, because the entire landscape will be generated, not stored. So every time you start a new game, you play on a new, randomly-generated landscape. But if you type in a password, the program interprets the information and recreates the old game from that information, so you can continue from where you left off. If you had ten-letter passwords, you could easily generate around 196,000 levels."

WAITER, THERE'S A FLY IN MY GAME

Several flies in fact, as Peter explains. "As Frogger goes along, he works up an appetite for flies. Every so often flies buzz across the screen, and if one nears Frogger, he automatically shoots his tongue out and eats it. But the more flies Frogger eats, the fatter and heavier he gets, so when he lands on an object that's floating on water it starts to sink and he has to jump off again quickly. This effect wouldn't last very long though, and after a while he'd shrink back to normal size by using a bit of froggy flatulence. This would also give him an extra burst of speed as the flatulence propels him along." Ahem.



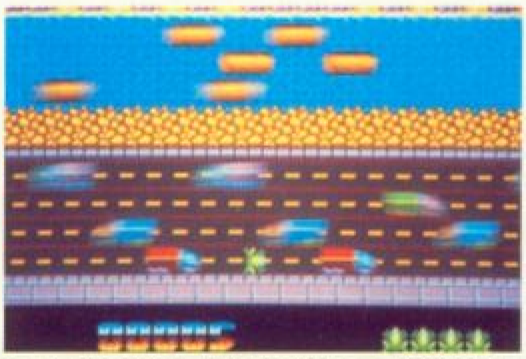
The fabled *Bullfrogger*, originally written as a game to pass the time while *PowerMonger* loaded, it's now gathering dust in Bullfrog's offices - which a crying shame as it's actually very playable.



Aquatic antics in another mock-up screen from Molyneux's modern *Frogger*. Bundles of extra features here too, such as the friendly motorboat frog, towing along the helpful lillypad. You can't afford to miss though - crocs abound in these waters.

LOVE STORY

"It would be good if you could have Frogger distracted by things. You could have Mrs Frogger who crops up from time to time on a lillypad. She would act like a love magnet that draws Frogger towards her, but you'd have to fight and keep him away from her because she'd be surrounded by dangerous objects."



More *Bullfrogger* action, this time with Froggy himsel in dire peril. This long-exposure shot gives an idea of how fast the traffic motors along. It also looks as though Froggy is about to get squished into the tarmac. Aaaiiieeeee!

central character to life and give him more character than the original's inanimate green blob. "In cutesy arcade game's it's important to establish a player/character bond. If a player is going to spend more than ten minutes playing a game, he has to care about his character. I'm not suggesting that people ever really think about how much they like Mario or Sonic, but it's subliminal and it's important."

So how do you create a character you can care about? "The most important quality is the way the character reacts with your commands and to the environment," says Peter. "The ways he responds to things creates the biggest bond. Sonic does this well - if you leave the controls alone for a few seconds he taps his feet and looks at the screen, and if he's on a small platform, he'll balance on one foot, teetering. It all helps create a more interesting character."

"For *Frogger*, this type of treatment would work particularly well. Running the game at a fiftieth of a second, you could produce some dazzling frog-leaping animation. If he jumps on a log, he'd scamper around as the log rolls under him. If he jumps on an alligator, his eyes would bulge with fright. If a lorry zoomed past him, he'd do a 'Woooaah!' gesture. This would all be tied in to different sound effects. Remember, it's the not the size of the sprite that determines its character, but the animation. That's something that the development of the people in *Populous II* is teaching us."

The most controversial changes are in the game's design. "The game wouldn't be just a single static screen, but an on-going, vertically-scrolling level. This would help keep the player involved, as the game's less fragmented. I'd keep the gameplay varied by adding new terrains for Frogger to cross. There'd be a back garden area, for instance, where you'd have dogs, cats, birds and dangerous plants to avoid, and a sewer area, with even bigger alligators.

"One of the advantages of this new scrolling format is that you can give the enemies more detailed movements rather than just moving from side to side in a straight line. They'd move in fixed movement patterns so that with practice the player would learn their habits and play to avoid them. Random movement patterns don't work, because then it's more down to luck than judgement."

"A change of pace every now and again is essential, like in the Mario games, because people get bored with doing the same thing all the time. Frogger could jump into a pond and instead of jumping, he would swim. Underwater you'd have real froggy momentum, so Frogger would push himself along in little bursts. In this section the enemies would come down the screen towards you instead of from the side, and there'd only be a limited amount of air, so Frogger would have to catch oxygen bubbles in the water to top up his supply."

Peter's more than aware of the dangers of updating an old classic. "It's very important that you don't destroy the feel and spirit of the original. The trick is to enhance the game while keeping the original qualities intact. Hence, the basic idea remains the same - it's still all done from a plan view, and the little frog's got to work his way up the screen, avoiding danger. That's another thing I like about *Frogger* - it's a passive arcade game. You don't kill anything or go looking for trouble. You just have to avoid things." Aaaah.

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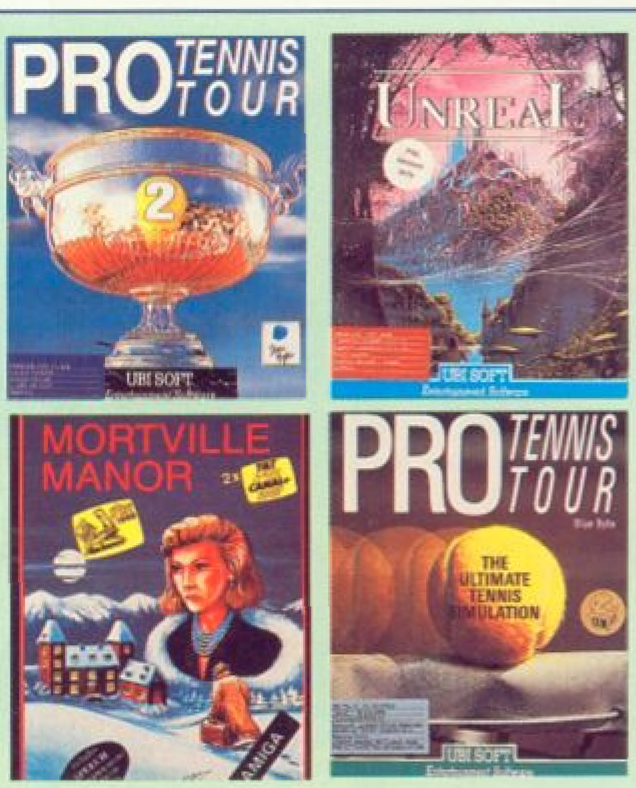

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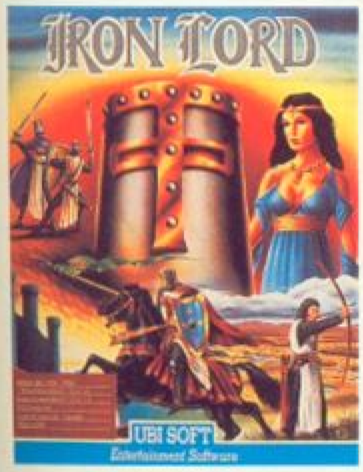
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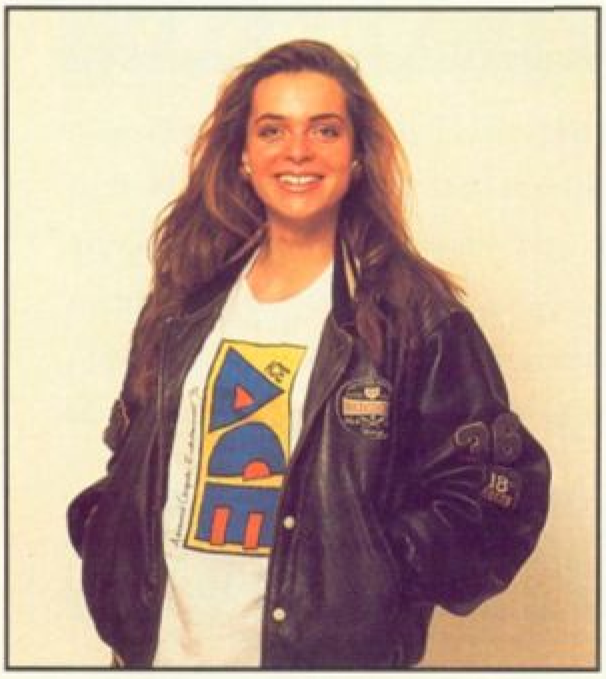
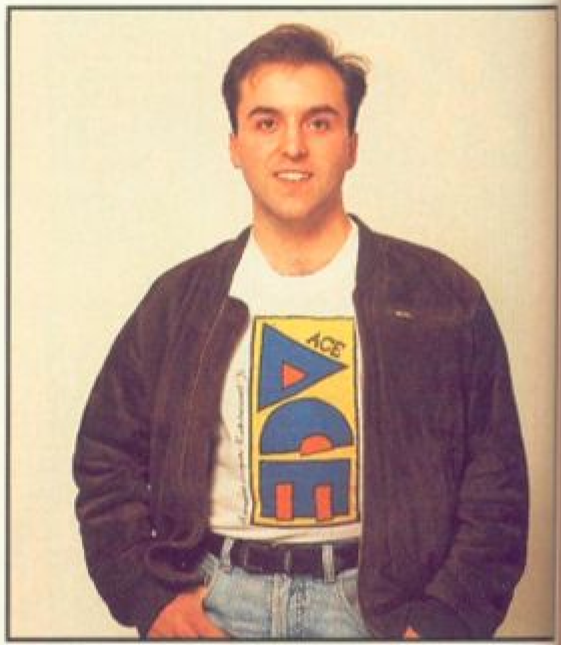
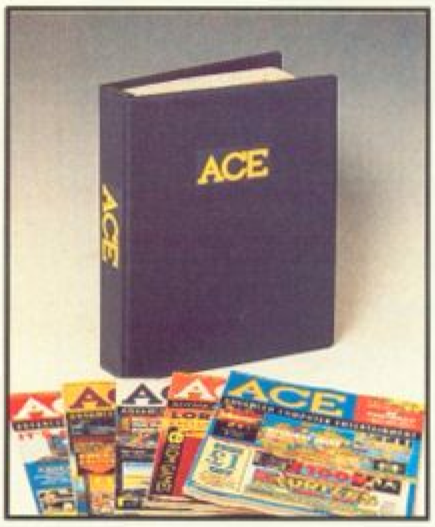


There can surely be nothing more sexy and fashionable than the ACE t-shirt. This latest item in the *Ace Clothing Collection* is what every self respecting computing genius will be wearing this season. The eye catching ensemble has been exclusively designed by ACE's own art editor, Jim "Gaultier" Willis, for the lover of fine things and the reader with good taste. The t-shirt is available in sizes small, medium and extra large and can be purchased at the ridiculously low price of £5.99





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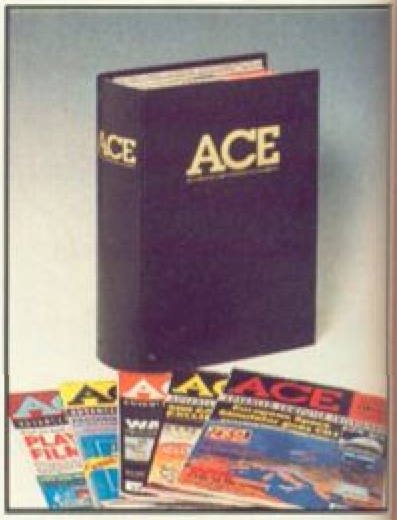

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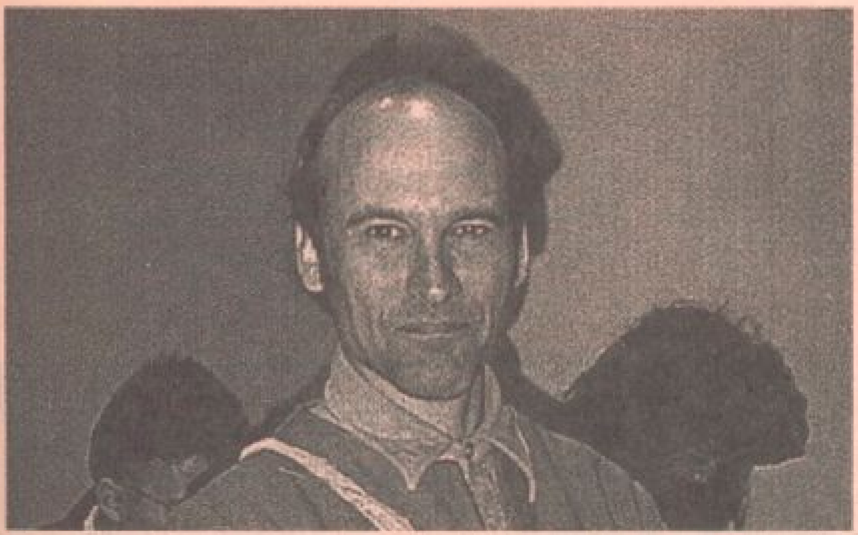

The legendary Chris Crawford, founder of the American Computer Game Design Conference and designer of seminal titles such as Balance of Power and Balance of the Planet is just one of the star turns at the ACE Conference in September – tickets cost £65, but YOU could strike lucky and get a FREE ticket. See the mini-competition on page 12 (the Blitter End)...

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Have you ever wondered which games get the highest review marks across ALL UK magazines? Have you ever wondered whether the games that sell the most are the games with the best reviews, or the biggest ads? Have you ever wished you could have a definitive list of games that all UK reviewers say you've GOT to have? Now's your chance: the ACE Charts collate information from every UK games magazine and tell you exactly which games are scoring what...AND how they're selling.

96 Hardware Buyer's Guide

Our definitive tech listings and buyer's guide. Updated every month to keep you up-to-date on the hardware options in the high street. Check out the power, the programs, and the potential of each machine before you buy...

117 The ACE Prize Crossword

A pound for ACE should tie things up nicely (4). And a prize possibility if you crack our monthly puzzler.

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Where have all the techies gone? Long time pa..a..ss..i..ng!

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The technological equivalent of the Dead Sea Scrolls: chart the milestones of gaming history across the pages of the world's leading entertainment technology magazine.

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Amiga, PC, ST, Megadrive, Game Boy, Lynx, and Super Famicom owners get the latest instalment of the ACE machine-specific chat columns.

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Those pretty boxes in your local dealer are giving you the eye. Which one should you take home for dinner? Check out our updated list of rave-rated games that are still strutting their stuff on the shelves...

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Pat Winstanley assesses the latest PD gaming possibilities.

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Win a free ticket to the greatest UK games conference ever!

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ACE has brought you over 40 issues, all packed with info on games technology. If you're missing any back issues – such as this one, which gave you exclusive coverage of the first PC based VR system – then telephone 0858 410510 for availability and order details or check out p101.

ACE CHARTS

Every month the unique ACE Charts rate games NOT according to sales, but according to the review marks they got in ALL British games mags...

Each month, we collect all the available UK games magazines, and check out the review marks for each game. Then we simply work out the average mark that every game receives - the figure in the right hand column (out of 100). The higher the mark, the better the reviews. AND you can win a prize every month - see the opposite page.

One thing's for certain: Mirrorsoft must be chuffed over the success of Xenon II's budget re-release . And Microprose's Sorcerors Get All The Girls is striking evidence that text'n'graphics adventures are still alive and kicking.

IBM PC

Chuck Yeager Air Combat	Electronic Arts	93.84
Martian Dreams	Origin	92.93
Sorcerers Get...	Microprose	90
Heart of China	Dynamix	90
Logical	Rainbow Arts	88.5

German-based Rainbow Arts stops the Yanks from making a clean sweep of the PC top five. It's also nice to see a change from the PC's usual diet of flight sims and traditional strategy – only Chuck Yeager, which is well worth the number one slot, and a good mix of gaming styles making up the rest of the chart.

AMIGA

Xenon 2: Megablast	Mirror Image	93.67
Hunter	Activision	91.29
North and South	Action 16	89.25
3D Construction Kit	Domark	88.25
Manchester United Europe	Krisalis	86.42

Third budget title to top the Amiga chart: evidently no-one's forgotten the impact Xenon 2 made first time round.

ATARI ST

Xenon 2: Megablast	Mirror Image	96.25
Lemmings	Psygnosis	94.5
Flood	Star Performers	89.75
RBI 2	Domark	85.33
Toki	Ocean	85

Lemmings hangs on but Xenon 2 collects its second number one this month with one of the highest scores ever on the ST.

GALLUP CHARTS

...and here's how they sold! Use the Gallup sales charts below to compare review marks with sales performance

The success of Castles on the PC just goes to show how important first impressions are in the software business. When the program was launched, journos were knocked sideways (ACE included) by the original scenario and authentic strategy. This led to a great deal of pre-release coverage in magazines that has obviously given the title very strong support at launch. Unfortunately, it only goes to show (see our review on page 56) how misleading first impressions can be. The good news, however, is that EA have promised a vastly more polished product when the game hits the Amiga.

Meanwhile, Kick Off 2 continues to astonish by re-entering the charts at number 4. It's rather daunting to note, however, that KO2 is just one of no less than 14 re-entries in the ST top 20 chart (as opposed to 7 in the Amiga), which could be taken as evidence of a dearth of quality new releases for the Atari.

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AMIGA

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ATARI ST

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Armour Geddon	Psygnosis	£25.99
Kick Off 2	Anco	£24.99
Teenage MH Turtles	Mirrorsoft	£24.99

THE STOCKMARKET

In addition to our games charts, we also have a bit of fun with the figures each month when we produce the ACE Stockmarket. This is the list of the companies whose games are getting the highest review marks at the moment. Any software house that gets to the top of this Roll Of Honour has a right to crack open a bottle of champagne...

Having collated all the games reviewed in the latest issues of computer magazines, we calculate the average mark that each publisher received for every one of its games on each format. We print only the top 25 companies each month. In fact, we keep tabs on all of them, but you don't want to read through a list of over 100 names in every issue. Occasionally a new company will enter the listings, in which case its name is marked with an asterisk. This month, we welcome budget labels Respray and Star Performers, straight in at number one, and Hi-Soft, better known for its languages and utilities, to the ACE Stock Market.

Finally, we take care that the information here is genuinely useful. To that end, we don't count companies which have only received a single solitary review.

How HOT were last month's games?

Despite some very high individual scores (see the ACE charts), the Software Index, which is the average of all marks received, is at its lowest rating for 18 months. How can this be? Well, unfortunately, alongside all the dazzling stuff listed on these pages, there have been some budget stinkers out on review over the last month, which have pulled the figure down (one game received the stunning average of 9.5 out of 100). Watch the index next month for (we hope) a return to normal service.

Software index: 70.59

PUBLISHER	SCORE
*Star Performers	96.25
Psygnosis	93
Origin	92.93
Microprose	91
Krisalis	84.42
Sierra	84
Mirror Image	83.53
Virgin	82.5
Dynamix	82.08
*Hi-Soft	81.75
Gremlin	81.73
Bitmap Brothers	81.5
Action 16	80.88
Activision	80.57
GBH	80
Infogrames	80
Core Design	79.67
IDEA	79
*Respray	78
Electronic Arts	77.67
Demonware	77.5
Ocean	76.79
Millennium	75.25
Rainbow Arts	74.06
Hit Squad	73.8

WIN A PRIZE!

If you can predict the entries in next month's ACE charts (NOT in the Gallup charts), you can win a free game for your machine. Here's how...

STEP ONE

Find a **postcard** – or write your entry on the **back of an envelope.** Enter your name and address, a daytime telephone number if you have one, the machine you own, your age, and the Round Number (in the box below).

STEP TWO

Examine this month's charts. Then, using your knowledge of the games scene, try to predict which games will come top of the ACE charts next month. Finally, enter on your postcard:

- the top game for the IBM PC
- the top game for the Amiga
- the top game for the ST

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ENTER A SUGGESTION FOR EVERY MACHINE! But remember that your chances of winning may increase if you do.

STEP THREE

You can also try to predict which company will be at the top of next month's Stockmarket listing (see this page). Enter on the card:
'**The top softco will be...**(name of company)'

STEP FOUR

Post the card (WITH a stamp!) to us to arrive not later than the closing date for this round (22nd August). The address is:

ACE Stockmarket
30-32 Farringdon Lane
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The first correct forecast for each chart taken out of the hat wins a prize. If you get more than one entry correct, you'll be entered in further draws for each category, thus increasing your chances of winning a prize. And don't forget to include the Round Number!

THE RULES

- All entries must be received by August 22nd 1991.
- No employees of EMAP, or of any company involved in the production, distribution, or sale of ACE Magazine are eligible for entry.
- Only one entry per household. Proof of posting not held as proof of delivery.
- We cannot undertake to deliver specific software titles as prizes, but rest assured that we will make every effort to ensure that the games get the adrenalin pumping!

THIS IS
ROUND 22

Round 19 winners:Steven Grimes of Chelmsford who spotted Swiv for the Amiga, and Erik de Loos of The Netherlands who got Lemmings for the ST. No qualifying entries, however, pinpointed Sim Earth for the PC. Ah well...

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HARD SELL

Once again, a rather truncated *Hard Sell* this month. Still, it should hopefully provide an at-a-glance comparison between computer and console. Still wondering what to go for in the great 'Console or Computer?' debate? Well, if you can afford one of each, our money's on the Amiga and Megadrive. But if you only go for one, get an Amiga. It's an excellent all-round performer that gives the best VFM.

COMPUTERS

ATARI STE

Models: Atari 520STE; 1040STE; Mega STs
Package: 520 and 1040 have keyboard with built-in disk drive; Mega versions have separate keyboard. Keep eyes peeled for current software bundles.
Memory: 520STE 512K; 1040STE 1Mb; Mega ST 1, 2 or 4Mb. All machines can be expanded internally to 4Mb.
Processor: 8-MHz Motorola 68000
Recommended Retail Price: 520STE £299; 1040STE £399
Contact: Atari PR (0753) 33344

IN BRIEF

Hard days for the machine that arguably started the avalanche to 16-bit computers. The STE boasts capabilities almost on par with its arch-rival the Amiga, but the Commodore machine seems to be the one most people want these days. As shame, because this is still a great general purpose home machine for games, small business and productivity, and thanks to its MIDI port is still the number one choice for MIDI musicians.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Low-res 320 x 200; medium res 640 x 200; high-res 640 x 400
Palette: 4096
Colours: Black and white in high-res; 4 colours in medium-res; 16 in low-res.
TV: Yes.
Monitor Output: RGB.
Monitor Supplied: No.
Monitor Options: Atari monitors SM124 high-res mono; SC1442 med res colour.
Sprites: No.
Speed: Fast
***NB** High resolution display is only available on monochrome monitor; medium and low res displays only available on colour monitors or TVs.*

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: Yes
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: Three 8-bit PCM stereo sound channels.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 720K
Disk Price: Around £1.50
Disk Performance: Fast, reliable.
Keyboard: 96 keys including 10 functions keys. Has a cheap feel which can be improved with third party spring kits.
Joystick/Mouse: Two joystick ports are standard; two-button mouse is supplied with machine.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Excellent. The budget market provides a relatively cheap way of building up an impressive collection of software classics.
Current Releases: None of the major software houses ignore the ST so it is well served with plenty of good software.
Games: Across the board.
Graphics: Good with some excellent software to manipulate them.
Music: Excellent. Plenty of sound samplers, editors and MIDI software make this the musician's choice.
Prospects: Very good, but the Amiga is currently the favourite with software houses in the UK and the chances of a sudden boom of interest in the ST Stateside look very slim.
Software Loading: No problems at all. The STE's drive is fast and friendly to the ear. Be warned that some companies still release games on two or more single-sided discs (a hang on from the old days when the ST had single-sided drives) which can mean unnecessary and annoying bouts of disc swapping.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: Very common and quite cheap. Beware very old, single sided ST machines.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Return to dealer if faulty

COMMODORE AMIGA

Models: Amiga A500; A1500; A2000; A3000
Package: A500 has keyboard and built-in drive with separate PSU; A1500 and A2000 have separate keyboard with built-in (fan assisted) PSU. A3000 is a very powerful machine indeed.
Memory: A500 512K; A1500 & A2000 1Mb; A3000 2Mb.
Processor: 500/1500/2000 7.15 MHZ Motorola 68000; A3000 16 or 25MHz Motorola 68030,
Recommended Retail Price: A500 £NA; Screen Gems £399.99; Flight of Fantasy Pack £399.99; Class Of The 90s pack £579.99 (all packs inc A500); A1500 from £999; A2000 from £1199(for 1Mb+20Mb hard disk); A3000 from £3160(for 2Mb+40Mb hard disk). (All prices inc VAT).
Contact: Commodore (0628) 770088

IN BRIEF

A stunning specification with custom chips to rival almost everything around, the Amiga is the first choice for the most exigent of games players and video professionals. After an initially shaky start the machine continues to sell extremely well and has overtaken the ST in the UK, though the latter machine still has a slightly larger installed base. The A1500 is near-identical spec-wise to the A2000, but cheaper. The A3000 is a top-end workstation substitute; includes *Workbench 2*, featuring enhanced icons, file handling, and security features plus *Amiga Vision*, a multi-media programming tool. A3000 also comes in three configurations, ranging from a 16MHz/40Mb hard disk to a 25MHz/100Mb disc.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: From 320 x 200 to 640 x 400 (more possible in software)
Palette: 4096
Colours: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 or 4096
TV: With modulator.
Monitor Output: SCART + composite video in monochrome.
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: C1084 £349.99
Sprites: 16 in hardware + unlimited BOBS from soft/hardware.
Speed: Very fast with good software.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: No. Third party interfaces available.
Stereo Output: 2 phono connectors.
Performance: Among the best around. Custom hardware squeezes 9 octaves of 8-bit digital sound into the four channels.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5inch – 837K; A3000 40/100Mbyte hard disk formatted.
Disk Price: Around £1.50.
Disk Performance: Noisy and sluggish. Third party software is available to improve matters.
Keyboard: 94 keys. 10 function keys and separate cursor cluster.
Joystick/Mouse: Two-button mouse supplied as standard.
Interfaces: Two Joystick/mouse; stereo audio; external disk drive(s); RS232 serial; Centronics parallel printer; SCART RGB/video; composite monochrome video; expansion bus (internal on A1500 & A2000; 32-bit on A3000); clock/memory expansion on A500 only; internal PC expansion on A1500, A2000 and A3000.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Similar to the ST.
Current Releases: Everyone's doing them.
Games: Something for everyone.
Graphics: Quality and range is unsurpassed.
Music: Needs better support for MIDI. Internal sound software is well supported thanks to IFF standards.
Prospects: Excellent.
Software Loading: Noisy but usually reliable. Plagued by viruses.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Old Amiga 1000s can be picked up cheaply enough but these lacked the extra graphics modes of later models. Try to find a good value pack.
Second Hand Availability: Becoming common. Best buys are late Amiga 500s with Kickstart 1.2.
Maintenance: One years guarantee. Return faulty machines to dealers.

IBM PC

Model: IBM's PC was the first PC to be accepted in large quantities (not the first PC) and remains the standard by which all others are judged. There are hundreds of clones and variations including offerings from Amstrad, Atari and Commodore. In general, with PCs you pay for speed and better graphics standards. The extra money is worth it if you can afford it.
Package: Depends on the manufacturer although most are supplied with monitors. They can even be bought in kit form at no extra saving
Memory: Usually 512K or 640K. Can be anything from 64K to 1Mb+. Always go for a 640K model.
Processor: Intel 8088/8086 in base machine is sometimes replaces with the faster NEC V20/30. More expensive machines are based on Intel's much faster 286, 386SX, 386 and even the latest 486.
Recommended Retail Price: Can be picked up for as little as £299 for a "no frills" machine. With top-of-the-range 486 based clones – and the official IBM versions – the sky's the limit. Look for a good EGA or VGA model for between £750 and £1200.

IN BRIEF

Superb value if you want the ultimate all-rounder, the PC still betrays its business origins. Almost every major software house now port their titles to the PC but these remain limited by the constraints of the basic (most common) machines – which means they tend to be limited in sound and graphics. Definitely NOT first choice if entertainment is your preferred use for computers, or if you cannot afford the better EGA or VGA models (which are really essential for good games playing).

GRAPHICS

The first PCs weren't fitted with graphics as standard but most clones incorporate the necessary hardware and come with a monitor. There are three main standards: CGA – a nasty but all to common colour display, EGA about the lowest colour display worth considering, VGA - an Amiga/ST beating display; and Hercules monochrome. EGA or VGA which are usually only fitted as standard to more expensive machines (Amstrad's PC2086 is one exception).

Resolution: CGA 320 x 200; EGA 640 x 350; Hercules 720 x 384; VGA 800 x 600.
Palette: CGA 8 (in two fixed sets); EGA 64; VGA 256
Colours: CGA 4; EGA 16; VGA 64; Hercules 2
Monitor Output: TTL RGB/RGBI (CGA); analogue RGB (E/VGA)
Monitor Options: Vast. Many monitors are dedicated to just one or two modes – some have amber, green or white monochrome displays – check before buying.
Sprites: None
Speed: From very slow - 8088 - to very fast - 80486

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Built-in sound is very poor. Third-party add-on sound boards such Roland (£380) and Ad-Lib (£150) - which is fast becoming a standard - provide synthesiser-quality sound through an amplifier.
MIDI: Third part interfaces available.
Stereo Output: With boards, yes.
Performance: Not the ideal machine for the musically bent – an Atari ST offers more for MIDI, the Amiga more for software sound purists.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 5.25in –180/360K/1.2Mb; 3.5in 720K/1.44Mb
Disk Price: 60p – £3.00
Disk Performance: Average. Most PC owners also buy hard disks. A large amount of PC applications software refuses to work unless you have a hard disk.
Keyboard: Almost as many
v

CONSOLES

ATARI LYNX

Package: Lynx. Pay extra for peripherals and inclusive *California Games*.
Processor: 16-MHz 6502
Console Memory: 64K
Recommended Retail Price: £79.99 (£99.99 with peripherals; £129.99 with peripherals and game).
Contact: Atari PR (071-388) 9871

IN BRIEF

Designed by the man behind the Amiga, the Lynx is an amazing handheld. After a shaky start, the Lynx is doing fine and - if the rumours are to be believed - is starting to take off in the States. Its most obvious competitor, the Gamegear, lacks the Lynx's frills, but makes up for it with smaller unit size and TV adaptor.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 160 x 102
Palette: 4096
Colours: 16
TV: No
Monitor Output: No
Monitor Supplied: Yes - 3.5" back-lit colour LCD
Monitor Options: None
Sprites: Special graphics hardware effectively treats ALL screen objects as sprites!
Speed: Fast

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Very good
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: Four-channel, five octave stereo sound has to be heard to be believed.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Eight-way joypad.
Ports: Cartridge port; multi-player port; miniature stereo headphone jack.

SOFTWARE

Price: £30-35.
Cartridge Memory: 8Mb
Existing Software Base: Very small.
Current Releases: *California Games* is a great 'freebie'.
Prospects: Uncertain but several new titles in the pipeline.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Very few
Maintenance: One year's guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★
Overall: ★★★★

NINTENDO GAMEBOY

Package: Main unit with *Tetris* game.
Processor: 1-MHz customised 8-bit Z80A.
Console Memory: 8K
Recommended Retail Price: £69.99.
Contact: Deighton PR (071-836) 2973

IN BRIEF

Nintendo were the first company to produce a dedicated handheld console and now it seems everyone wants to get in on the act. On reflection even the Game Boy was a long time coming since the technology employed by the display is starting to look dated. Not to be dismissed simply because of mono graphics – this machine has some superb titles and games making use of the two-player link-up option are tremendous fun (especially the superb freebie *Tetris*).

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 20 x 18 characters.
Colours: 4 grey shades.
Monitor Supplied: Yes - LCD display is lit by ambient light.
Sprites: 40 8 x 8 pixel blocks..
Speed: Fast for what it is.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on headphones.
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: Plays a lot better than it looks.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Built-in 8-way joypad.
Ports: Headphone socket;dual-machine interface.

SOFTWARE

Price: £20-25.
Cartridge Memory: 64K
Existing Software Base: The best for any handheld.
Current Releases: Increasing
Prospects: Excellent

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Avail.: Some companies (e.g. Console Quest) do 'em.
Maintenance: One year's warranty

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★★
Expansion: ★★
Overall: ★★★★★

NINTENDO SUPER FAMICOM

Package: Console unit, controller unit and *Super Mario World*.
Processor: 3.58 MHz 65C816.
Console Memory: Not known
Recommended Retail Price: N/A (Japan price = £100)
Contact: Local dealers

IN BRIEF

With the weight of all-powerful Nintendo behind it, the Famicom can hardly fail. Although not hugely superior to the Sega Megadrive technically, it's the games that impress - notably the bundled *Mario World* (which will no doubt help sales no end) and *F-Zero*. That said, there are some real duffers amongst the gems (*Big Run*, anyone?), but it's still early days yet. The Super Famicom's enormous games potential has barely been scratched.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 512 x 512..
Palette: 32,768
Colours: 256
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB, SCART
Sprites: 128.
Speed: Remarkable

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 8 Channel custom 16-bit PCM/digital.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Supplied.

Ports: One big expansion port.

SOFTWARE

Price: £40-50.

Cartridge Memory: 16 Mb..

Existing Software Base: Small.

Current Releases: Lots, and plenty more planned.

Prospects: How can it fail? Back orders were in the millions before it was launched.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Grey import.

Second Hand Availability: None as yet.

Maintenance: Take care- grey imports are rarely under warranty.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★

Sound: ★★★★★

Expansion: ★★★★

Overall: ★★★★★

SEGA GAMEGEAR

Package: Gamegear unit.

Processor: 3.58-MHz Z80A

Console Memory: 8K RAM/16K Video RAM.

Recommended Retail Price: £99.99

Contact: Sega (071-727) 8070

IN BRIEF

Opinion used to be that the Gamegear was going to be the handsdown winner in the battle of the colour handhelds. But times - and, more importantly, prices - have changed. The Lynx, a technically superior machine with some fine games available for it. has had its price slashed and - if US sources are correct - is enjoying a sudden upswing in support from American consumers. In the Gamegear's favour are the clout of mighty Sega and the potential to turn the unit into a portable TV via a cheap adaptor (around £50 is current estimate). But at the moment, it's anybody's game.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 160 x 146

Palette: 4096

Colours: 16

TV: No.

Monitor Output: No.

Monitor Supplied: Yes - 3.2" back-lit colour LCD.

Monitor Options: None.

Sprites: Not known.

Speed: Okay.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Good.

MIDI: No

Stereo Output: Yes

Performance: Three-channel PSG sound channels + noise channel.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Eight-way joypad.

Ports: Cartridge port; multi-player port; miniature stereo headphone jack; TV tuner port.

SOFTWARE

Price: Around £20-25

Cartridge Memory: Not known.

Existing Software Base: Small.

Current Releases: Few as yet, but lots in the pipeline.

Prospects: Very good.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.

Second Hand Availability: None as yet.

Maintenance: One year's guarantee

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★

Sound: ★★★★

Expansion: ★★★★

Overall: ★★★★

SEGA MEGADRIVE

Package: Console unit, controller, and *Mickey Mouse or Moonwalker* game.

Processor: 8-MHz 68000 + Z80B

Console Memory: 74K main, 64K video.

Recommended Retail Price: £149.99.

Contact: Virgin Mastertronic (071-727) 8070

IN BRIEF

Excellent example of the new 16-bit console technologies. The first decent 16-bit console to receive official support in the UK.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 320 x 224

Palette: 512

Colours: 64

TV: Yes

Monitor: No

Sprites: 80

Speed: Very fast

SOUND

Speaker Quality: N/A

MIDI: No

Stereo Output: Yes

Performance: 12 channel stereo sound is produced by a custom FM chip and sounds fantastic.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Dedicated controller supplied.

SOFTWARE

Price: £30-50 (typically £35).

Cartridge Memory: Not known.

Existing Software Base: Good

Current Releases: Lots.

Prospects: Very good.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP

Second Hand Avail.: Some companies (e.g. Console Quest) do 'em.

Maintenance: One year on UK machines.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★

Sound: ★★★★★

Expansion: ★★★

Overall: ★★★★★

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SHOP WATCH

Software seller Dirk Longhorn trembles at the approach of secret Nintendo agents, and wonders where all the wire-heads have gone...

I see that Domark have hijacked this year's buzz word 'virtual' and cobbled it onto their new compilation of Incentive Freescape games 'Virtual Worlds'; I'm surprised that they didn't rename 3D Construction Set as 'Reality Development Tool' or something while they were at it. Mind you, I'm not knocking it – it's a very impressive package and is one of the few 'big' titles to be released during this long hot summer. As such, I hope it does very well.

There are many retailers currently facing something of a dilemma regarding software. There have been very few 'biggies' released this summer and so sales at retail level are somewhat depressed as hardware is almost as difficult to shift as the proverbial chewing gum on the trousers. The dilemma is whether or not to stock imported console software. America and Japan are some months ahead of this country regarding new releases and so there is a fairly buoyant demand (facilitated by so many of the monthly magazines reviewing imported software) for these 'unofficial' titles. Up until now, individual retailers have decided themselves whether or not to stock these titles but a new sinister card has recently come into play: Nintendo are visiting retailers and examining their stocks, if they see imports they are dropping very unsubtle hints that the retailer's supply of 'official' software is being put into jeopardy by his continuing to stock these 'grey' imports.

At this time of year that would probably be neither here nor there, but we all have to have an eye on Christmas and the prospect of December without an official supply is worrying. So what should retailers do? Stop stocking these titles and turn customers away to rivals or mail-order merchants? Or brave it out and say 'bugger off, you bullies, you can't intimidate me'? I wish I knew – perhaps the solution is to have an 'under-the-counter' supply....

'Have you got any more Game Boy titles other than the ones on your shelf?'

'How do you mean, sir?'

'Well, Boris sent me...'

'Right you are sir, know what you mean, step this way...'

WHERE HAVE ALL THE TECHIES GONE?

Six years ago, the typical customer who came into our shop would want one of the following:

a) an improbable lead to connect an exotic printer (which we had never heard of) to a computer;

b) to see a selection of esoteric programming books;

c) utilities;

d) help with the current program they were writing (many an hour I've sat with a budding programmer helping to sort out his variables);

e) to see the latest games that had been released;

f) to find out why their Commodore 64 games load on their friend's computer but not on theirs...

Nowadays the (e) group have, like so many grey squirrels, virtually swamped the others and the role of the computer shop in society is changing rapidly. Whereas it used to be the local meeting place for all the wire-heads, it is now much like a record shop with programming teams' latest masterpieces having as much impact (and, unfortunately, much the same shelf-life) as the current hit parade favourites.

But, one of the great unanswered – unasked even – questions of our time is 'Where have all the wire-heads gone?'. What happened to all the people I used to DIMension arrays for? The ones who had trouble with their floating points?

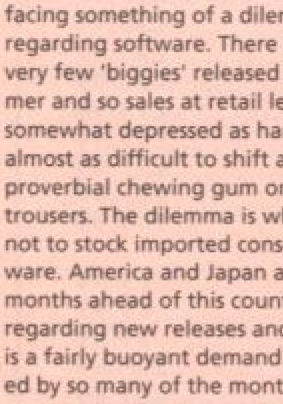
Have they all gone on to become ace programmers, or have they 'grown up' and lost interest? Who knows?

Finally, Dixons are very firmly embracing the new generation of consoles, aren't they? Their new catalogue has the first four/five pages devoted just to consoles and their computers (indeed the cover of the 'mag' shows four players crowded around a Nintendo having a four player game of....Super Mario Brothers! Oh well, who can compete against that?

● Dirk Longhorn

BACK ISSUES

Here's a checklist of topics covered in some of our older issues – for a complete list of available issues, telephone 0858 410510 for more information...



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To order, clearly list the required issue numbers and send them, along with your full name and address and a cheque or postal order for the full payment made payable to ACE magazine, to: **ACE Back Issues, PO Box 500, Leicester LE99 6AA.**

- **ASAT (AVIONICS SITUATIONAL AWARENESS TRAINER)**, combat flight simulator for the US Air Force by Perceptronics. Uses Falcon software by Spectrum Holobyte/Mirrorsoft. Features include: networking for multi-player action, tactile feedback and fingertip weapon selection. [ACE14]
- **BATMAN DIGITAL JUSTICE** is the world's first interactive hypercomic by Pepe Moreno. "Digital is the art medium of the future." [ACE30]
- **BATTLETECH,** "the world's first complete computer simulation for play", featuring multi-player cockpits equipped with 40Mhz 16 million colour graphics processors, stereo spatial sound and life-like controls as you command 31st century Mechs. [ACE28]
- **CD-I** (Compact Disc Interactive) is destined to become the entertainment and education medium of the 90's. [ACE9/21/22/24/32/33/35]. Check out Issue 30 for multi-media principles (hypermedia in particular) and issue 24 for a preview of the Philips CD-I system.
- **CDTV,** Commodore's attempt to bring multi-media to the mass-market. An Amiga with built-in CD-ROM drive and CD-audio capability, redesigned to look like a VCR. [ACE34]
- **COSMIC OSMO,** the world's first hypergame - courtesy of Cyan Software/Activision. Check out issue 23 for the first review, issue 24 for a feature on hypergames, and issue 30 for general hypermdia coverage. New Osmo CD-ROM version featured in issue 36.
- **FLARE TECHNOLOGY**, trio of talented Cambridge-based games hardware engineers. Their custom-designed Flare One micro formed the basis of the Konix console. [ACE11]
- **FUJITSU FM TOWNS**, a 32-bit 16 million colour computer with built-in CD-ROM drive. If you bought ACE 31 you could have won one! [ACE27]
- **HYPERGAMES** like Cosmic Osmo and Batman Digital Justice are paving the way for CD-I entertainment. [ACE24/30]
- **INTERACTIVE VIDEO TAPE**, an alternative to CD-I. [ACE26]
- **KONIX CONSOLE**, a powerful British console with revolutionary built-in joystick controller which could change into a steering wheel, motorbike handle or aeroplane yoke. Ultimately failed due to a lack of marketing money. Rumours suggest a new buyer is interested. [ACE18/25]
- **LIGHTSPEED SPRITES**, three researchers from Carnegie Mellon University, USA have developed an algorithm enabling them to generate graphical simulations of objects seen travelling at 99% of the speed of light. [ACE34]
- **MEDIA LAB**, Boston-based research institute with one simple brief - invent the future. People at this Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) facility are working on computer generated holograms, interactive computer newspapers and virtual reality man-machine interfaces. [ACE9]
- **NEO-GEO**, the arcade-based games console from SNK in Japan, with storage capacity for 64Mb games cartridges and IC card capability. [ACE32/34]
- **RENDERMAN**, the unique 3D graphics system by Pixar which creates polygons with photorealistic detail. [ACE35]

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DIRECT LINE

To YOUR micro...

Monthly machine specific columns for the users of the seven most popular machines, written from a personal viewpoint by other users...

SEGA MEGADRIVE

If Sega was a man, he would be walking around at the moment gleefully rubbing his palms together and beaming a fat, smug, self-satisfied grin. Rather like the person everyone thought was class weed suddenly turning into a hero and publicly biffing the school bully on the nose.

You see, at the June CES Show in Chicago Sega managed to upstage Nintendo's launch of their Super Famicom with a wealth of very impressive titles and a host of new third-party licensees. People were surprised. So were Nintendo, who were expecting their relentless war machines to roll on unchallenged.

Adding an extra push to the Sega offensive is the fact that Megadrive ownership in the States recently scorched past the 1,000,000 mark, and is still rising fast! Why? Well, there's a lull in the marketplace - impatient Nintendo owners who are getting bored with their 8-bit NES and want to experience 16-bit gameplay are being seduced into taking a stroll down Megadrive Road by the fact that Megadrives now cost only £90.00 (with Altered Beast and another free game of your choice) and that they can buy it now, rather than waiting until October for the Super NES!

On the software front, there's loads of new stuff in the pipeline. Oodles, it would be true to say. Want a quick run-down? Oh, all right...

First off, there's *Berlin Wall* (Kaneko) and *Turbo Outrun* (IDG's very promising conversion of the classic race game sequel). From Ballistix there's *Test Drive* (more high-speed marque malarkey), *Onslaught* (crud conversion of the cruddy flop Amiga game), *Mike Ditka Power Football* (American style, that is) and *Turrican* (multidirectionally scrolling arcade adventure-cum-shoot 'em up starring a robot).

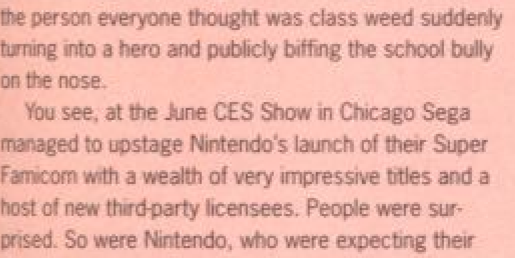
Electronic Arts are releasing *Road Rash* (motorbikes, violence and high-speed action), *Ice Hockey* (ice, violence and high-speed action), *Star Flight* (none of the above), *Earl Weaver Baseball* (yawn-o-rama) and *Rings of Power* (RPG fun 'n' laffs, if you like RPG fun 'n' laffs which personally I don't) and they're also doing Psygnosis' *Killing Game Show* and *Shadow of the Beast* (they look just like the Amiga versions, but hopefully won't play the same).

New development house, Dreamworks have Jesse *"The Body" Ventura Wrestling Superstars* (order that after closing time!) and *Trampoline Terror* (sounds like toss, but it's quite a hoot, and Tengen are lining up a veritable goodie-bag of gonad-grabbing conversions including *Pitfighter, Ramparts, Ms PacMan, Paperboy, Pacmania* and *Roadblasters*.

Flying the flag for Britain are Mirrorsoft, who are currently working on *Speedball II* (dead impressive) and *Battle Master* (dead dull). Sega have a pile of stuff, including *Toe Jam and Earl* (a "breath of fresh air video game" that's about as challenging as bursting out of a wet paper bag)

So it's all happening on the Megadrive front!
JULIAN RIGNALL

IBM PC



Did you watch Neighbours last month when Paul Robinson's micro was invaded by one of those nasty computer viruses. What can you do if your PC catches a dose of digital disaster? As Josh isn't available to cure such problems in real-life, those very nice people at S&S International have stepped in with an alternative solution.

The latest version of Dr Alan Solomon's *Anti-Virus Toolkit* apparently tackles over 650 viruses and their variants. I never knew there were this many strains of potential pain, a frightening thought isn't it?

"Severe viruses work covertly, typically by swapping around very small elements of data files so the unprotected user remains unaware of the infection for a long period of time," reveals Dr Solomon. By the time a virus is discovered, few people are likely to have back-ups going back far enough to restore completely clean data files.

Anti-Virus Toolkit costs between £59 and £275. The more expensive price is primarily for business types who want the piece of mind provided by monthly upgrades, newsletters and fax alerts. If you feel a little unprotected, call S&S International on (0442 877877).

Remember, pirated software is the easiest way to infect your software collection. Play it safe and stay clear of dodgy backstreet dealers.

Despite enormous success in America and Japan, baseball has never really taken off over here. A lack of popularity hasn't stopped Electronic Arts launching another baseball game endorsed by Earl Weaver. What's new, then?

For starters, this sporty simulation comes with various camera views of the on-field contest, large fully animated characters and a 'physics model that recreates realtime baseball'.

The impatient programmers at Electronic Arts have also included a quick-start feature to get you into play within thirty seconds. Prospective players shouldn't get too carried away by VGA visions of arcade action, the emphasis in this sequel flows more towards the strategy side of things.

Oh, I nearly forgot. Tom Selleck, alias TV private eye Magnum, is starring in a new baseball movie to be released next year.

Cowabunga is out, Have a Cow is today's current catchphrase. Yep, America's latest cult cartoon characters are currently being shown on satellite television, printed on T-shirts and signing chart-busting rap songs. The Simpsons are set to hit the poor PC...

A leading Canadian software development outfit has been commissioned to write not one but two games based around this year's replacement for those teenage turtle thingies. Konami asked DSI, developers of Test Drive and 4D Boxing, to get cracking on an original arcade adventure title called Bart Simpsons' House of Weirdness and a conversion of the newly released Simpsons' coin-op.

In the arcade release, players have the choice of controlling Homer, Marge, Lisa or Bart in a mission to rescue baby Maggie who has been kidnapped by crooks in pursuit of a stolen diamond. Using household gadgets like a vacuum cleaner, skipping rope and skateboard, the family fend off the thieves and save Maggie. The Simpson's arcade game is packed with humour and big bright colourful graphics. Pop along to the local coin-operated video game emporium for a sneak preview of what's coming to your machine.

With the clout of being possibly the world's largest producer of entertainment software, Konami has enlisted the help of Simpsons creator, Matt Groening, in bringing Bart's cult character and pernicious personality to life.

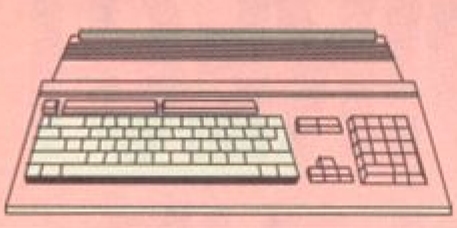
House of Weirdness begins as Homer grounds Bart to his room until he is 'ready to act like a human being'. There's little chance of that, eh readers! To escape his tragic confinement, Bart tries to find a way out through the hallway, closet door and bedroom window. He must enter each of these routes to find some essential stuff that transforms him into the radical 'Bartman: Avenger of Evil'. Only then will Bart be prepared for the basement, backyard and the 'coolest item in the universe'.

"Bart Simpson has quickly become an entertaining character and a symbol of rebellion and radical humour for both children and adults," says Konami's Brian Dimick. Both titles should be available in time for Xmas.

Warthog is winging its way back! Flushed by their success with the reformed re-releases of older games, Dynamix and Sierra On-Line have devised an upgrade of their A10 flight simulator. *Tank Killer Enhanced* is available to registered owners of the original game and comes with improved graphics and animation, new flight modelling for added realism, and better support of sound cards and flight yokes..

• Rik Haynes

AMIGA



Do you need an all-in-one broadcast studio with digital effects, dual frame buffers, character generator and 3D animation? Have you got $3,995 to spend on such a device? Answer yes to both these questions and you should be thinking about purchasing the critically-acclaimed Video Toaster from Amiga graphics specialists, NewTek Incorporated.

Being situated in the sleepy mid-west state of Kansas hasn't prevented NewTek''s engineers from devising one hot piece of gadgetry. No wonder the Video Toaster took them over four years to develop.

The New York Times says Video Toaster is the equivalent of a $60,000 TV studio and USA Today believes it makes an Amiga act just like a Hollywood production studio. High praise indeed, but what does this wonder widget actually do? For a start you can create animated videos in full broadcast resolution and 16.8 million colours. Video Toaster pumps out fades, digital trails and tumbles like there's no tomorrow. Yeah, that's a lot of vision in anybody's language.

NewTek's LightWave 3D Animation software helps you produce special visual effects including flying logos and fog. Plus, there are many more sophisticated graphics tricks such as 'fast photorealistic rendering with adjustable anti-aliasing', 'particle systems with variable motion blur' and 'realtime scene preview with jog shuttle control'. I don't know what this stuff does, but they certainly sound impressive.

You can phone NewTek on (0101-913-354-1146). Tell them ACE sent you and they might say, 'Gee, I love that magazine'.

Konami and Mirrorsoft are about to unleash a stock car sim endorsed by a big cheese on the NASCAR racing circuit. Winston Cup Champion Bill Elliott helped design the 'ultimate driving experience' complete with authentic pit stops, duels for pole position and 200mph spin-outs. All this reminds me of Mindscape's *Days of Thunder* - not a very good omen.

The trouble with stock car racing is that it's all pretty boring until a crash happens. Konami has tried to inject excitement into their release through the implementation of a first person perspective view of the track and built-in car editor. Here you adapt your beast by adjusting gear ratio, spoiler angle, tire stagger and transmissions for the hairpin turns of Sears Point or the high banked ovals of Daytona and Talladega. If you really get into the game, there's a Gameboy version for players who want to fine-tune their stock car skills on the way to work every morning.

To make you feel green with envy, Konami in America has just run a brilliant competition to meet Bill Elliott, witness the 1992 Daytona 500 and win a sporty Ford Thunderbird Super Coupe. The finalists are due to play the NES adaption of Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge later this year - where they'll compete to capture the flag as well as the Ford. Now that's what I call a prize! How about something similar in the UK?

Disaster struck Kevin Bulmer, creator of *Terminator 2* for Ocean, when thieves broke into his house while he was on holiday last month. These tiresome troublemakers ransacked the place and stole Bulmer's Amiga-based development kit, including a hard drive full of programming routines which are useless to anybody but poor Kevin. Luckily this unfortunate situation hasn't affected the release of the game. Good job really, considering the movie is breaking box-office records in America and is due to open over here later this month.

No typing is required in King's Quest V so fantasy RPG lovers can concentrate all their precious thoughts and reflexes on exploring gloomy dark forests and vast mountains in search of the royal family of Daventry. For the past year, Sierra On-Line has employed some of the very best programmers and designers in the USA. Games like King's Quest V are proving the prudence of this recruitment scheme.

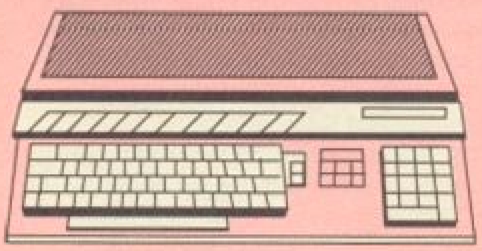
Desktop pilots after some plane facts should look no further than The Official Lucasfilm Games Air Combat Strategy Book. Phew, what a mouthful! Authors Rusel DeMaria and George Fontaine have plenty of hot hints to Battlehawks 1942 and Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain. Even the Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe have been dissected for your playing pleasure.

Without repeating any information already found in the manuals, DeMaria and Fontaine provide new insights into the historic air missions and the people who flew them.

The air strategy guide teaches you the special flying manoeuvres used by pilots in battle, explaining in step-by-step detail how to fly your plane through the tricky acrobatic moves of the skilled combat pilot.

• Gary WebbACE

ATARI ST



July's Olympia British Music Fair (or International Music Fair as it is now known in an attempt to broaden the range of exhibitors) is usually the launching point for loads of new music software.

This year, though, there was hardly a computer to be seen; major distributors like Evenlode Soundworks and Zone failed to appear, and the remaining exhibitors showing loads of updates but very little in the way of new product.

Good news came from distributors MCMXCIX, whose entry-level ST sequencer Trax has now been ported to the PC, Amiga and Mac,still costing only £59+VAT. Encore, the powerful Mac notation program, has been ported to the ST and PC; it can record in real- time or step-time, transcribe MIDI files, and support 64 staves with 4 voices per staff. Cost is £369+VAT.

New from Opcode is Track Chart, for all formats, a studio management program providing the engineer with on-screen mix information which can be locked to SMPTE. Printed track sheets can include information such as song titles, track names, comments, start times, track groups and virtual tracks, and while playing Track Chart can trigger user-defined MIDI messages. Cost is £139+VAT.

Sound Technology's C-Lab display featured music education programs Aura and Midia, together with the long-awaited cut-down version of the Notator sequencer/ music transcription package,

Notator Alpha was The most striking product of the Show, though, had to be Philip Rees' G2 MIDI controller. This plywood-bodied, polymer-coated MIDI controller looks like nothing so much as Mr. Spock's Vulcan harp. With six velocity-sensitive piezo pickup plates mounted where the strings of a guitar would be, the G2 has twelve button on the neck, which can be programmed to produce any note from a "strummed" plate. A knob on the end of the neck and the LCD on the body allow you to store forty "necks" of chords, giving a total of 480 chords. A thirteenth button on the neck calls up new programs, and a pressure-sensitive plate on the body allows you to introduce performance effects such as pitchbend.

In conjunction with an ST running a sequencer package, the G2 would form a powerful programming system; it will be available from around October at just over £400.

Not seen at the IMS, but launched a few weeks earlier at the trade-only APRS (Association of Professional Recording Studios) Show, was the K-AT from Friendchip, to be distributed in this

country by Q-Logic, the inventors of the MIDI Metro visual timing display.The K-AT is a remote controller designed for software sequencer users; it plugs into the joystick port of the ST, and is supported by desk accessory software which lets you assign any of the 14 available control functions to any ST key, so you could for instance select sequencer controls for Record/Play/Stop/Punch-In without being anywhere near the computer. Cost will be around £65.

Also on the way from Friend-Chip are Mini-Ma'x, a 12-in 15-out MIDI patchbay; and SM'X 900, an expandable version built up from 8-out units. The function of a MIDI patchbay is to allow you to route different MIDI controllers - a sequencer, drum machine, keyboard or MIDI drum pad perhaps - to a number of MIDI sound modules. They're invaluable in a large setup, but tend to be expensive and fiddly to use. The Friendchip products, though, are MIDI-controlled using Super Ma'x, an ST software accessory which uses a series of programmable gird screen displays which can be called up from your sequencer program, re-routing your equipment as you play! Prices have yet to be confirmed.

Another good bit of ST music news is the return of Hybrid Arts after a period in the distribution wilderness. SMPTE Track, GenEdit and HA's other MIDI software packages have finallybeen picked up by Digital Music. New versions in the pipeline include Edit Track Gold V6.0 and SMPTE Track Gold V6.0 for the

ST, at £129 and £395 respectively (with an upgrade path offer from Edit Track II and SMPTETrackII); and the latest version of the generic patch editor GenEdit, at £179 for the ST.

Digital Music's most interesting new launch is an unusual product from Scorpion Systems; "sYbil" isn't a sequencer or algorithmic composer as such, but a real-time MIDI program for improvised performances. Taking simple melodies from a MIDI controller, sYbil can turn them into multi-timbral chords, complex melodies,or even program change commands. The package is available at £99

●CHRIS JENKINS

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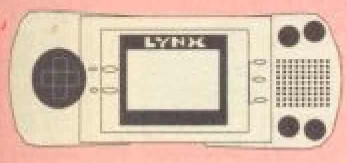

Atari may have won a PR coup when Gazza was seen holding a Lynx on the front page of The Sun, but Sega is pulling out all the stops promoting their Gamegear colour handheld console. Every time I switch on Children's TV - only for my kids of course - I'm bombarded by yet another give away competition, giving away the competition. Even cricketer Graham Gooch prefers his free Gamegear to buying a Lynx and I've just seen children's favourite TV personality Philip Schofield with one. Looks like Sega employs a public relations agency with better contacts if you ask me.

The bosses at Atari must be feeling the squeeze because they recently printed a 'Mine is Better Than Yours' sort of brochure filled with statements such as the 'Gamegear is based on the old Sega Master and shows it', 'Gamegear has no special features like scaling and rotation' and 'Gamegear is limited to 64K cartridges while the Lynx can take eight megabyte games'.

No matter what people say, size does matter. Er, the size of your software base that is! Sega is launching a new Gamegear title every week or so. I think it's about time Atari started to realise the Lynx needs up-to-date conversions from top people like Ocean and Konami if they're going to win the colour handheld wars. I'd rather play *Terminator 2* than *Turbo Sub* Know what I mean?

Thanks for the terrific response from people out to grab some free publicity for their Lynx-orientated efforts. My heart leapt with delight and surprise as I discovered the large number of generous souls helping other players with hints, maps, cheats and reviews. Well done, guys!

Judging by the mail I've received over the last couple of weeks, there are seemingly loads of active Lynx users dotted all around the country. I only wish we could form some sort of official club like the lucky Japanese video games players have for their consoles. Let's hope this dream of togetherness could someday become a reality. What do you say, Atari?

Without further delay, here's a quick run-down of the most active Lynx users around.

Sorry, if I've missed you out. Unfortunately, the mail has been effected by a local postal dispute so rewrite those letters and send them into me at the usual address (see below).

Atari Lynx Console User is the brand new, if an unimaginatively titled, magazine dedicated to our favourite handheld slab of silicon. I haven't actually seen the first issue yet, but if you're interested send 35p and a large SAE to: Lynx User, 11 Montgomery Drive, Spensers Wood, Reading, Berkshire RG7 1BQ.

Meanwhile, Andrew Reid is offering players a free sample of his fanzine if you send a first class stamp to 63 Croftway, Selby, North Yorkshire YO8 9DD. Don't forget to include your return address, though!

Last, but by no means least, Peter Terry has a more commercial venture in operation where he buys, sells and exchanges Lynx carts. There's also a monthly mag to keep his customers happy. Does Peter ever find time to sleep? For more details send an SAE to 32 Boma Road, Trentham, Stoke, Staffordshire ST4 8EB.

I'd love to hear from you if you've just started a user group or have some tips to share with other players out there. Or perhaps there's something bugging you about the Lynx or video games in general? Either way, please write to me care of Lynx Pink Pages, ACE, EMAP Images, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. For those of you really into high-tech gadgetry I'll also include our fax number (071 490 1094).

The aforementioned Turbo-Sub is an original Lynx game for one or two players. You must rid the planet of alien invaders who have taken over the skies and seas. Turbo-Sub uses the sprite scaling features of the Lynx to great effect, though some would say the gameplay is a little too basic by today's standards. This fast blast is out soon.

TAME THE GAME

Don't forget to defuse the ball in *TOURNAMENT CYBERBALL* if you want to keep those powerful running backs, agile wide receivers and star quarterbacks alive. Short plays such as Flex Run, Goal Line and LB Blitz are great against the run or short yardage plays. While short passes are hopeless when facing defensive line-up's like Safety Blitz and LB Drop. For long formations go with a Prevent, Corner Blitz or Flat Nickel. When playing offensive passes there's nothing better than a good Thrust, dastardly Double Cross or taking the Easy Money!

You can make your plane perform really tight turns in *WARBIRDS* by switching the engine off. When pursued by a persistent enemy, dive into the clouds to ditch them. Finally, and a rather obvious one here, attack aircraft from behind. Why should this be so air-pparent? Guns are forward-firing only in this game!

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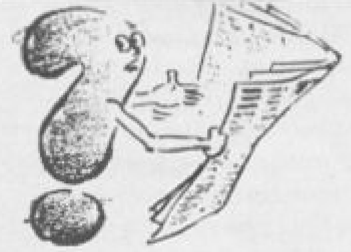

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GAMEBOY

Rebel forces are attacking the Death Star, Jawas are stealing your landspeeder and Chewbacca needs a shave. What am I talking about? *Star Wars* of course! And soon, Gameboy owners will be able to join the fun thanks to Lucasfilm Games and Ubisoft. This sneaky French firm has managed to snap up the rights to develop and market a game based around my all-time favourite swashbuckling sci-fi movie.

"*Star Wars* is the perfect theme for Gameboy," indicates Ubisoft's Christine Quemard, "The movie is just like one big video game. Star Wars will be one of the most exciting games available for Gameboy."

Gameplay will be similar in style to the NES adaption from Lucasfilm Games and JVC Musical Industries. Both titles follow the plot of the film, recreating the space combat and other great action sequences, culminating in the attack against Darth Vader's Death Star in a rebel X-Wing starfighter.

Trouble is, we're going to have to sit tight for at least seven months before we'll get a chance to use the force and kick some baddie butt. Don't know about you, but I can't wait to give it a go.

Everybody is kung fu fighting in *Double Dragon II* from American gaming powerhouse Acclaim Entertainment, Inc.

As beat-em-to-death-em-ups go, this martial arts series should go into the Bruce Lee record books of fun fisticuff frolics and power punching performance. Take a trip to your local arcade to sample its aggressive addiction factor for yourself, I promise you won't regret the effort.

Like the previous *Double Dragon*, Billy and Jimmy Lee battle street thugs with a combination of fancy moves and more conventional tactics like head butts and shin kicks. Don't get mad, get bad.

Cowabunga dudes! Another hip happening sequel is making its way to the Gameboy. Konami's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II features all those sewer and sidestreet locations kids have come to love. Question is, can the teenage turtles still cut it against tough competition from the *Simpsons, Terminator 2* and *MC Hammer?*

Based around the original coin-op arcade video game, the turtles try to save April O'Neil from the slippery scoundrels Shredder and Krang. Players set the difficulty as they make turtle tracks through six challenging levels and bonus pizza-collecting stages. When turtles break the law they're arrested, but players can rescue them once certain points have been reached in the game.

Konami is expecting more great sales with this neat release by targeting the 7-11 year-old gamer. After all, nearly a million copies of the first turtles title have been sold so far. Need I continue?

After the joint-promotions with savoury snackers Walkers and Smiths, it seems Nintendo has got a taste for fast food and so the company is preparing a media blitz with burger masters McDonald's.

Although none of the details have so far emerged, I think it's a fair bet that such a deal would include some sort of Super Mario Bros lunchbox and cheap toy figures from popular Nintendo games. Thankfully, I doubt whether we'll see a 'Mario Burger' or 'Zelda Shake' just yet.

The high-speed full-contact play in Blades of Steel puts Paul Newman's Slapshot film firmly in the shade.

One of the first hockey titles for the Gameboy, you can choose from eight different teams for practice, exhibition or tournament play. There's no time for rest as you pass, check, fight, shoot and, yeah, slapshot your way to the final match and overall victory.

Konami's Blades of Steel offers one or two player options and will be available from next month.

TAME THE GAME

Wipe those PIPEDREAM problems away with these perky passwords:

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LEVEL 13: REAP
LEVEL 17: SEED
LEVEL 21: GROW
LEVEL 25: TALL
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In case you also own another video game system, these codes work on all versions of the game!

When the BATMAN title screen is displayed, push [Upper Right] and [Start] for a sound test.

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• Masashi Kawakita

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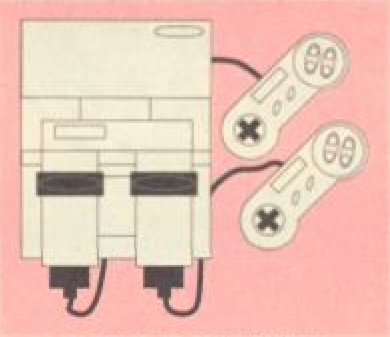

The race to get software ready for the US release of the Super Famicom (Super NES, as it'll be called) is continuing apace, and things are beginning to look very interesting.

The recent Chicago CES Show gave a good indication of what was coming out, but since much of the product was at a very early stage - many games had been in development for literally a few weeks (causing some dozy berks to think that they were all crap) - it generally looked poor when compared to the rows of spanking new, virtually finished games that were on display at the Sega stand.

Still, there were some golden gems around, the most impressive of which is *Super Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*. I don't know what planet last month's writer of this column was from, but the game isn't anything like the arcade original - it's merely based on it. The first level features great mounds of earth which burst upwards as you walk across the ground, cages filled with goodies, and newer, tougher baddies. There's also a range of new weapons with which you can unleash major death and destruction. It's definitely the best Super Famicom game yet seen, with graphics and sound that'll blow you away. Keep a watch out for it. Another joystick-throbbingly good title is *Super R-Type*. Again, it's not a straight arcade conversion, but is based on the machine. The first level is all-new, and features a backdrop of beautiful planets and stars. There is, of course, plenty of alien scum to blow into the middle of next week, and there's a variety of new and familiar weapons with which to do so. It looks a cracking game, and is one that shoot 'em up fans should get hold of when it's released later on this month.

Caveman Ninja is a very new Data East coin-op, and I was pretty surprised to see what seemed like a flawless copy on display at Data East's stand. I looked underneath the display, just in case they were pulling a fast one and had a coin-op PCB lurking underneath, but lo and behold there was a Super Famicom with a *Caveman Ninja* cartridge! It's a really neat beat 'em up in which you guide a wacky cartoon-style caveman across a zany cartoon-style backdrop, kicking the seven shades of shinola out of ker-a-zee cartoon-style baddies. In fact, the only annoying thing about the game is that it won't be available until early next year. Ah well.

Tradewest enter the Super Famicom market with *Ivan "Ironman" Stewart's Super Off-Road Challenge*, a faultless copy of the *Super Sprint*-inspired coin-op. The game looks, sounds and plays perfectly, and apparently uses the same code and the same player systems as the original arcade machine. Hot potato!

I also like the look of *Wrestlemania Challenge*. Starring the most famous of those beefed-up ham actors that play out utterly hilarious WWF wrestling sketches on satellite telly, this is could be the best wrestling game yet. The early demo I've seen sports some excellent graphics - the on-screen wrestlers really do look like the "real life" characters - I saw Hulk Hogan and the Ultimate Warrior - and the animation and sampled sound effects are both superb. Judging by the immense popularity of the sport, I think this could be a massive seller!

But what I'm looking forward to most of all are Electronic Arts trio of sports games: *John Madden's Football*, *Laker's Vs Celtics* and *PGA Tour Golf*. I saw very, very early demos (the *John Madden's* one was about a week old and was finished two hours before the show!) and having spoken to the programmers, I think all three could be amazing.

They'll basically be the same as the Megadrive versions, but with enhancements wherever the hardware allows it. So expect zooming following-the-ball 3D effects in *PGA Tour Golf*, and even more detailed graphics in *John Madden's Football*! Yowzer!!

Finally, if you're thinking of buying a PAL Super Famicom, thoroughly check it out and make sure you've got a guarantee from the retailer. Many PAL machines are unreliable, and often overheat. If possible, buy a SCART model.

JULIAN RIGNALL

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HOT OFF THE SHELF

Do you know, I hate writing the intro to *Hot Off The Shelf*. I mean take this month, for example. What on Earth is there to say about the Merry Month of... er... September? Nothing, that's what!

Surely you know the score by now: the top games from the last three months sliced 'n' diced for your delectation. Oh, and there's a smattering of classics too. Read on...

BATTLE CHESS 2

Electronic Arts ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £29.99

Sequel-itis spreads from Hollywood to the computer industry! This time round the rules are based on the Chinese variant of Chess, which introduces some new moves, has a river bisecting the board (which some pieces can't cross) and limits the King's movement to an 'Imperial Palace'. As before the board is viewed in 3D, with all the pieces 'taking' each other in a variety of amusing and well-animated ways. While a bit slow and irritating running from floppies due to all the disc swapping , a hard disc shows the game to be far faster and more lethal than normal Chess. A game that should keep even the most jaded Chess fan happy.

★ ACE RATING 895 ON IBM PC

BOULDERDASH

Victor Musical Industries ● Gameboy ¥3400 (Import)

Yet another steal from the aging C64's catalogue of great games. Hey kids, remember this? Guide cute and cuddly Rockford around umpteen (that's journo-speak for more than can be counted on one hand) mazes of boulders and meanies in pursuit of diamonds. But bear in mind that digging around boulders can make them tumble down on your head! An arcade puzzle game of the most addictive kind and yet another game ideally suited to Nintendo's B&W handheld wonder.

★ ACE RATING 908 ON GAMEBOY

CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT

Electronic Arts ● Amiga £TBA ● Atari ST £TBA ● PC £29.99

The two previous Chuck Yeager games were exemplary in every respect save one: there were no guns! Fine for the Ban-The-Bomb/Wear-Flowers-In-Your-Hair brigade, but more than a little disappointing for the rest of us. This latest outing with the grizzled old vet rectifies that complaint... and much more besides. Pilots can fly 'planes from either WW2, Korea or Vietnam in a number of missions. Even more fun is the ability to pit, say, a Mustang from WW2 against a Phantom from Korea. High realism means this isn't one for the pick up 'n' play brigade, but it's a fine purchase for the sim fan looking for a challenging and long-lasting experience.

★ ACE RATING 900 ON IBM PC

F-14 TOMCAT

Activision ● Amiga £TBA ● Atari ST £TBA ● PC £TBA

One can't help feeling that *F-14 Tomcat* is going to have something of an uphill struggle to be noticed, what with the recent release of a whole slew of top-notch flight sims, such as US Gold's *Jetfighter II* and *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*. To be perfectly honest *F-14* is inferior to both these competing titles, but it's still a high-quality product. The biggest criticism is that it's very hard to lose. Eject and let the jet crash into the desert and nine times out of ten Command will return you to active duty without even a ticking off.

★ ACE RATING 854 ON IBM PC

FLAMES OF FREEDOM: MIDWINTER 2

Microprose ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● IBM PC £TBA

Now this is a challenge; how do you sum up a huge game like *FoF*? The big thaw has set in, and Midwinter is now Agora, the island HQ of the Atlantic Federation. You play one of their crack agents with the task of scuppering an impending attack by the evil Saharan Empire. The majority of the game takes place in a massive solid-3D world, with your spy able to use any mode of transport he/she may come across, everything from on-foot to helicopter. But this is no shoot-'em-up. There's more than enough strategy and subterfuge to keep any non-arcade fan happy. A major contender for game of the year - already!

★ ACE RATING 950 ON ATARI ST

4D SPORTS BOXING

Mindscape ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £24.99

This violent clash between two solid-polygon generated pugilists is the best rendition of the 'noble art' yet seen on a home computer. The use of polygons allows the action to be viewed from absolutely any angle, and a video playback option allows you to watch that decisive upper-cut again and again. Highly realistic, some great polygonated expressions of anguish on the fighter's faces, a huge range of moves and a lot of work to be put in if you're to become World Champ!

★ ACE RATING 900 ON IBM PC

GODS

Renegade ● Amiga £25.53 ● Atari ST £25.53 ● PC £TBA

Renegade crash onto the game's scene with this, their first release - and what a corker it is too! Set in Ancient Greece, the player controls a hunky warrior who must be guided through four levels of platforms, monsters and puzzles to a face-off with Something Very Nasty in the Underworld. Okay, so Renegade win no prizes for the written-by-computer plot but the implementation is something else - superb graphics, intelligent aliens (and they are smart, too!) and bags of clever surprises and secret bonuses to discover. It seems

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★ ACE RATING 908 ON AMIGA

HEART OF CHINA

Dynamix/Sierra ● Amiga £TBA ● IBM PC £40.85

Set in the 1920s Asia, you play 'Lucky' Jake Masters, a down-on-his-luck pilot who's started turning to the bottle for solace. Desperate for money you accept the job of finding the kidnapped daughter of a wealthy businessman, a task that takes you deep into the heart of revolutionary China... It all adds up to a rip-roaring adventure through the East, featuring an exciting plot, the ability to switch between characters, apt arcade sequences, some gorgeous VGA graphics and highly atmospheric soundtracks. Every Dynamix release improves on the last, and *Heart of China* is no exception. An essential purchase for your PC.

★ ACE RATING 910 ON IBM PC

JETFIGHTER II

Velocity/US Gold ● Amiga £TBA ● IBM PC £39.99

Designed by Bob Dinnerman (of *F/A-18 Interceptor* fame), this is arguably the best flight sim on PC. Boasting a huge 125 missions and some state-of-the-art 3D, the accent is firmly on playability rather than rigorous technical accuracy. One of the cleverest features is the Adventure, in which you play a deadly game of tactical Chess with an enemy invasion force, first flying an attack mission then defending against the enemy's counter-attack, with the aim of driving the enemy forces back and eventually out of America.

★ ACE RATING 935 ON IBM PC

LEMMINGS

Psygnosis ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £24.99

In an age of ever-faster vector graphics and smoother parallax scrolls, Psygnosis was the last company expected to release a simple-looking game based on the suicidal tendencies of some cutesy little rodents. The object of the game is beautifully straightforward - you must guide a certain number of randomly-meandering lemmings to safety from one end of a peril-strewn level to the other.. You can endow chosen lemmings with a range of special abilities, such as climb or dig, with which you can get them past traps and obstacles. Incredibly playable and addictive, it's a game that will hopefully encourage programmers to spend more time on a game's gameplay

★ ACE RATING 910 ON AMIGA

LOGICAL

Rainbow Arts ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● IBM PC £24.99

Will this game make you lose your marbles? This latest addition to the ranks of arcade puzzlers presents the player with a 'board' made up of gulleys and rotatable dials. Marbles roll down the gulleys and can be slotted into one of four slots in each dial. The aim is to explode all the dials on the board by filling all four dial slots with marbles of the same colour. It all starts of easily enough, but later levels feature complications and restrictions far too bizarre to go into in the small space available here. Infuriatingly addictive.

★ ACE RATING 895 ON ATARI ST

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE

Krisalis ● Amiga £25.99 ● Atari ST £25.99 ● PC £29.99

With the original *Manchester United* selling over 100,000 copies, I suppose a sequel was inevitable. This time around you can try and take 'the Boys' to victory in the UEFA, European and Cup Winner's Cups. The game is viewed in side-on pseudo-3D, and while it's not the fastest footy game around (the classic *Kick Off* still holds that title) it's without doubt the prettiest, with a wide range of animations for nearly all the footy moves. Add the polished-till-it-gleams front end and some nice player manager elements, and you have a great all-rounder for any fan of the National Sport.

★ ACE RATING 855 ON AMIGA

MARTIAN DREAMS

Origin/Mindscape ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £36.99

Game scenarios don't come much weirder than this. By means far too contorted to go into here, the player is accidentally shot through Space to Mars inside a Jules Verne-inspired Space Bullet. If this wasn't strange enough, also along for the ride are such contemporary luminaries as Sigmund Freud and Nikola Tesla! Once crash-landed on the Red Planet, the adventure really begins, with vicious vegetables on the prowl, the survivors of a previous Bullet expedition to find and the ruins of a dead civilisation to explore. Origin fans won't be disappointed and neither will anybody else.

★ ACE RATING 928 ON IBM PC

PIPE DREAM

El/Lucasfilm ● Gameboy £25 (Import)

Most readers will probably be more familiar with this game under its original title of *Pipemania*. All the action takes place on a 10 x 7 grid. Using a cursor you have to drop varying sections of piping onto the grid, with the aim of making a pipeline for 'flooz' to flow down. Should the flooz leak before it has passed through a set number of pipe sections then it's game over. Later levels introduce directional pipes (the flooz MUST flow a certain way) and obstacles. Infuriatingly addicitive - it's the sort of game the Gameboy was designed for.

★ ACE RATING 910 ON GAMEBOY

POWERMONGER

Electronic Arts ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99

A new computer classic, with the highest ACE rating ever. You play a warlord, exiled from your homeland along with twenty followers, who has just landed on the shores of 200 islands, ripe for conquering. Unfortunately the current residents are not quite so keen on your enforced leadership, and will do all they can to resist you. Using a similar viewpoint to *Populous*, the landscape is here polygon-based and thus can be manipulated in just about any way you require. The excellent visuals are supported by highly atmospheric sound. All control is by mouse, and couldn't be easier. To play it is to worship it. An absolutely essential buy.

★ ACE RATING 973 ON AMIGA

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Broderbund/Domark ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● IBM PC £24.99

A game that could so easily go unnoticed and unloved by the shelf-scouring hordes looking for the latest licence. The graphics, when static, are fairly unimpressive (although they do get better on the later levels), but when they move... The animation as you guide a young Prince through umpteen levels of platforms, pits, spikes and swordsmen is quite excellent and life-like. And the gameplay, although it may sound uninspired, is as good as the graphics. Some of the action has a real *Indy*-style cliff-hanger aspect to it. Miss this and you'll be crying for weeks!

★ ACE RATING 915 ON AMIGA

R-TYPE

IREM ● Gameboy £24.99 (Import)

In one fell swoop, this conversion of the classic coin-op snatches the crown of Top Gameboy Shoot-'Em-Up from *Nemesis*. All your old favourites are here: The Force; beam weapon power-up; Giger-esque end-of-level aliens; frantic actions; sweaty palm excitement. How do the programmers manage to pack so much into such a small package? Only IREM have the answer! If there's one niggling fault it's the warbling soundtrack, which cuts out annoyingly everytime a sound effect is played.

★ ACE RATING 820 ON GAMEBOY

SAVAGE EMPIRE

Origin/Mindscape ● PC £34.99 ● Amiga £TBA

Using the *Ultima VI* interface, Origin have taken a side-step from the medieval world of their previous games, and now plunge you into a nightmare scenario where you control a party of characters mysteriously transported to a dinosaur-infested Lost World. A good yarn well told and - hard to believe I know - actually *better* than *Ultima VI*.

★ ACE RATING 955 ON IBM PC

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Lucasfilm/US Gold ● Amiga £25.99 ● Atari ST £25.99 ● IBM PC £25.99

Monkey Island is the latest in the series of animated graphic adventures pioneered by Sierra but now proving a nice little earner for Lucasfilm. You play Guybrush Threepwood whose ambition is to become a fully-fledged pirate. This entails a lengthy (30 hours is Lucasfilm's

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estimate) quest through a world populated by scurvy knaves and assorted cut-throats. Game interaction is made easy-as-pie by the simple point-'n'-click control. By turns both tense and funny, the absorbing atmosphere is only slightly marred by the overuse of the '™' symbol.
★ **ACE RATING 922 ON AMIGA**

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
Sega/Virgin ● Megadrive £34.99
Aaaah, *Sonic the Hedgehog*. At last a quality title for Sega's little black beauty that really shows what the machine can do in the hands of the inspired. It certainly makes up for the likes of *Ka•Ge•Ki* and *Midnight Resistance*. Believe me, you've never seen a platform game move this fast. And thankfully, clever game design has ensured that high speed doesn't mean high unplayability. But better than *Mario*? Well, perhaps not. It lacks the Nintendo giants depth and long-lasting challenge. But it's a cracking game, none-the-less, and you'd be a right fool to miss it. Can't wait for *Sonic 2!*
★ **ACE RATING 925 ON SEGA MD**

STRIDER
Sega/Virgin ● Megadrive £39.95
This coin-op conversion was reviewed some time ago on home computer. Thankfully, the Megadrive incarnation is supremely superior - if you didn't know better you'd swear you were playing the arcade machine. Strider Hiryu has to jump and tumble through levels of arcade-perfect action. Stunning for its graphics, sound and gameplay, *Strider* is a must-buy for any Megadrive owner.
★ **ACE RATING 919 ON SEGA MD**

SUPER MARIOLAND
Nintendo ● Super Famicom (inc. with grey-import console)
Could this be the best platform game available? The game follows the seemingly never-ending adventures of Mario, as he jumps and joy-rides his way through 99 sub-levels of platform action. What makes the game so special - apart from its superlative graphics, stunning sound FX and super-satisfying control - is the never-ending variety in the gameplay; it's not all just running and jumping. Complete this and you can consider yourself a real games supremo.
★ **ACE RATING 910 ON FAMICOM**

SPACE QUEST IV
Sierra On-Line ● Atari ST £TBA ● Amiga £TBA ● IBM PC £34.99
Top-Quality goofball space adventure with lots of humour and minimal dithering around. Sierra have managed to combine excellent graphics and a bizarre-yet-comprehendable time-travelling story line. Guide Roger Wilco through a roller-coaster adventure involving absolutely no typing and some excellent puzzle-design. Every location contains a surprise! Not too good if you own a slow PC, and is virtually unworkable from floppies. Otherwise, a pretty essential purchase if you can put up with the constant craziness.
★ **ACE RATING 880 ON IBM PC**

WING COMMANDER
Origin/Mindscape ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £34.99
Another 3D space combat game, but radically uses of stunning ray-traced and digitised graphics for the spaceships. They rotate, shrink and grow with amazing speed and fluidity. Animated scenes punctuate the action and present the first true cinematic experience on a home computer. The multitude of missions mean this isn't a game of surface gloss. Sadly only best appreciated on the high speed PC.
★ **ACE RATING 949 ON IBM PC**

WONDERLAND
Magnetic Scrolls ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99 ● PC £34.99
The Scrolls, having stunned the world with *The Pawn* way back in 1987, return with a new classic. An adventure game based on the famous novel *Alice in Wonderland*, the plot follows the book enough to retain its weird flavour but not so slavishly as to make it solvable by simply knowing the story. The lavish text, teeming with hundreds of tough (but logical) puzzles, is accompanied by a number of stunning animated graphic scenes. The future of adventure games is here. An essential buy.
★ **ACE RATING 910 ON IBM PC**

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FICTION

Welcome to a new series of short stories paying homage to the many varied styles of game genre found in our vibrant marketplace. Each month we'll be wowing you with gripping edge of the seat stories in the style of a particularly popular game of the moment. This month our imagination was especially gripped by semi-cover game and not boring flight sim *Thunderhawk*. And so it is with no little pride that we present...

BLOOD ON THE ROTOR BLADES

By Jim Douglas and Gary Whitta

VOLTS

The rough leather straps gnawed into Klangghammar's wrists. Warm, thick blood ran into little puddles along his forearms. But the centimetre-deep grooves gouged out by the abrasive restraints would pale into insignificance when Klangghammar experienced the searing 500,000 volts that the Clay County Jail electric chair was about to deliver.

A man with a face like the cold stone of the Eiger and a heart to match, Ex-Colonel and top chopper pilot Hardy Klangghammar was about to meet his maker. Resolutely silent to the last (this, in part was ensured by the black rubber bit forced into his mouth to prevent him biting through his own tongue during electrocution) Klangghammar dispassionately mulled over his capture, enforced drug addiction and framing for a series of grizzly murders at the hands of Central American drug overlord Manuel Costa Rica Alberto Fandango.

Klangghammar had done questionable things, and the world would undoubtedly be a safer place without him. Indeed, Klangghammar could take it like a man, but to die a coward's death on his own home soil without the chance to wring the truth - and the life - out of the greasy albino s.o.b. was making him most unhappy.

As the priest read Klangghammar his last rites and an orderly tightened the steel skull cap around his head, the grizzled pilot knew these were to be his last moments on God's precious Earth. A distant electrical humming noise was growing in volume and pitch somewhere behind him, but he could not turn his head to see the generator from which it was coming. What Klangghammar could see, directly in front of him, was a young man standing behind a plate glass window, his hand resting gently on a large lever-switch mounted on the wall. In a few moments that lever would be thrown downwards, and Klangghammar would receive the customary two jolts that the US penal system requires to send you to your maker. But Klangghammar knew that even here he must show no fear, and so he gritted his teeth and stuck out his chest in one last gesture of eternal defiance as the priest closed his bible and backed away. Dignified to the last.

Suddenly, the man behind the glass seemed distracted. His hand wavered on the switch and then moved away from it. Over towards his desk. To... the phone! He listened intently to receiver, shaking his head and then nodding. Klangghammar feared his eardrums would burst as he strained to the point of blackout to try and hear the words being said. The man hung up the phone and motioned to the skull-cap orderly. Looking slightly disgruntled, and mumbling under his breath, he unstrapped the prisoner's hands, feet and after wrestling the skull cap free, helped Klangghammar to his feet. "You're out," he said.

PROPOSITION

An hour later and Klangghammar was sitting in an aircraft hangar, across a peculiarly elegant mahogany desk from a suited granite-face who called himself Jack Marshall. Showered and inspecting his freshly bandaged wrists, Klanghammar quietly listened while Marshall talked.

"You're a goddamned burnout, Klangghammar. Your file makes anything but pleasant reading. Striking a commanding officer? Insubordination? Discharging a weapon in the officers' canteen? Murder??! If it had been my hand on that switch you would have fried in a second."

"But it wasn't," Klangghammar cleverly observed.

"Right. And unlike you, I know how to follow orders. And mine come from the top. The very top. We've got a big mother of a problem and we need an expendable psychopath to get us out of it."

"I'm retired now," said Klangghammar, looking around the room in the arrogant, disinterested fashion that he had spent years perfecting. "I don't do your dirty work any more."

"Fine," said Marshall coolly. "Then you can go back to the chair." He looked at his watch. "If we hurry, I think we can have you Bar-B-Q'd by four."

Klangghammar shifted uncomfortably in his chair. He didn't like not having a choice. "What's the deal?" he said after a long pause. Marshall took a folder from his In-Tray marked Top Secret and tossed it across the desk at Klangghammar. Begrudgingly, he flipped it open and looked at the papers inside. There was no mistaking the girl in the black-and-white picture on top of the pile.

"Of course you know who that is," said Marshall. Of course Klangghammar knew. Every red-blooded man in the country did.

"That's Tania Jeremysmith, President Jeremysmith's only daughter. And she's been kidnapped." Klangghammar looked up in disbelief as Marshall continued. "The CIA has done some digging around and linked the kidnapping to an international terrorist triad, consisting of a group of Middle Eastern fanatics, the Russians and some Columbian drug dealers. Of course you know that Miss Tania is not only the country's top glamour model and film star, but is also the leading authority on high-energy physics in the western world. We believe the triad may want her to build them an atomic bomb filled with cocaine to drop on Washington DC."

"The bastards," muttered Klanghammar. Marshall nodded, and then leaned forward across the desk, his face an iron mask of sincerity. "There's something else. The President has developed a rare bone condition - it's fatal unless he receives a marrow injection within the next 24 hours. Not only is Tania his only living relative and therefore the only person with compatible marrow, her special surgical training makes her the only person in the world capable of completing such a complex operation. And with the US-Soviet summit tomorrow, we need her back, Hardy."

Klangghammar decided to play it cool. He'd played plenty of poker in his time, and knew that he was playing verbal poker with Marshall here. And even though he knew he had a losing hand, he was playing his cards close to his chest. "What's in it for me?" he asked.

"We want you to fly in, bust some heads, rescue the girl and bring her back safely. If you do all that in time and the transplant operation is a success, there may be a presidential pardon. You'll go free and your record will be wiped clean. What do you say?"

Klangghammar thought it over for a few moments. "Can I have a gun?" he asked. Marshall nodded. "I'm in." he said. They didn't shake hands.

TRANSPORT

The AH-64-221B-69-724125-XLS-BLT-346 Super Thunderhawk Low-Level Interdiction Stealth Combat Helicopter sat dormant on the helipad, as Klangghammar emerged from the hangar dressed in his flight gear and carrying his laser-guided targetting vector helmet. He breathed in the cold, sharp morning air and looked at the sleek, black shape of the Thunderhawk. Billions of dollars and the western world's greatest military minds had gone into building it, so it looked more like a shadow than a helicopter, even up close. Radar couldn't see it. Sonar couldn't hear it. Not even the human eye could ever be sure if it was actually there or not. The weapons it carried were enough to raze a small third-world nation to the ground, and they had done on several occasions during some of the USA's less-publicised wars. This was a monster, a demon from every Russian's worst pillow-biting nightmare. It was the ultimate combat weapon.

"Good to be back," thought Klanghammar as he walked across the tarmac towards the helicopter - at least he thought he was walking towards it, it was always difficult to tell because of the way the special mulitplexar camouflage hull bent the light around it. Klanghammar groped his way around the helipad like a blind man for ten minutes until he finally found the Thunderhawk by walking into the tail rotor. He felt his way along the body of the machine and climbed into the cockpit. Then he got his first surprise. He was used to flying Hueys and A-10s in Nam, and was not prepared for the technological marvel that faced him now. Instead of the usual complicated joystick controls, in front of the chair was a single Amiga mouse, resting on a bolted-down mousemat. Ever since the tiny software house from Derby, England had demonstrated how it was possible to control a helicopter simply by using a two-button mouse, they had been standard equipment in all combat helicopters.

"It takes a little getting used to," said the voice from beside him. Klanghammar turned to see Marshall standing there. "But once you get used to it it's much easier than all that cyclic and collective balony. You can cycle through your weapons using the RETURN key," he continued, pointing to the customised Amiga 500 that formed the helicopter's central control console. "Remember you've only got 24 hours to complete the mission, so synchronise your watch. And just in case you had any ideas about jetting off to Cuba in this little baby, the water in the drinking fountain that you used before you changed contains a slow-acting poison. You'll be dead in 24 hours unless you return here to have the antidote administered. And we'll only do it if the President's daughter is with you.

"Christ!" Klanghammer spat at him through gritted teeth and lunged at him, but Marshall just backed away laughing and shut the cockpit door. "I think you'd better get a move on," he said.

FIREFIGHT

The whispering turbines of the Thunderhawk pulled Klangghammar through the dawn. Hugging the terrain, the chopper flew south away from the cities, the skyscrapers and civilisation into the untamed warzone that is central America. He figured that he had a good twenty minutes to locate the terrorist base, would spend a further ten minutes softening up the defences with FFAR missiles and the 60mm chain gun before landing and rescuing Tania.

He figured wrong. They were on him like buzzards round a corpse. Ten, maybe fifteen hostile radar blips worked their way towards the Thunderhawk. Some moving faster than others. The quick ones were MiGs. The slower looked like more choppers.

"Pity...", murmured Klangghammar as he performed an outside loop and flicked the Thunderhawk upside down to face the first enemy chopper, "...for them."

Abdullah Ilyich Skanksi hadn't been out of the academy long. He could hit the cardboard ground targets and could make a pretty good attempt at downing those big helium-filled dummy choppers, but a live target, let alone a target as slippery and deadly as the airbone conga eel presented by Hardy Klangghammar in the Thunderhawk was another matter entirely.

Skankski fumbled with his "Live" switch, feeling a peculiar giggly excitement as he became aware of the importance of his situation. Could he, a lowly third-rate just-out-of-training combat novice really be about to down the legendary Klangghammar, thus thwarting the West's plans for a peaceful conclusion to tomorrow's Soviet summit? Could he, a nasty oily yellow-toothed communist with ill fitting overalls and no success with women put an end to the legendary career of the Americano's most feared and admired flying ace and womaniser?

No.

As Skanksi prepared his twin cannons and tried a back-up manoeuvre of locking on with his Air-to-Airs, the Thunderhawk barrel-rolled towards him out of the early morning sun, delivering a salvo of heat-seeking rockets and mini gun fire. And in the rotor blades' swirl, the flash of the cannon, the glint of sunlight on the cabin window, and in the reflective lenses of his victorious combatant's Ray Ban Aviators, Skanksi believed he saw in turn each Rider of the Apocalypse. Especially Death.

Banging his head like a demented gibbon and crying and wailing like the big commie girl's blouse that he was, Skanksi prepared for his white-hot lead and caudite, bone cracking, hair bleaching death. It was all over in a second.

Righting the Thunderhawk and lighting another Marlboro, Klangghammar calmly waited for the radar blip of his victim to disappear from the screen. His eyes then fell on the three MiGs bearing down from the north in standard arrow-head formation.

"Any more for any more," he asked with a wry smile. The trio of MiGs converged and began their multiple-G attack run, fingers twitching on their missile triggers and singing the Russian national anthem. Klangghammar spent a few moments calmly trying to tune into a good radio station, and after a few moments' knob-twiddling, "Living in America" by James Brown blasted over the quadrophonic surround-sound speakers. Klangghammar cranked it up to the max and switched it to the external PA system.

Something was getting to Komrade Kolonel Ivan Boristovski, squadron leader of the elite Red Skorpion Airborne Tactical Response Unit, the fastest and best air force in the world - that is, of course, apart from the one-man squadron that was the legendary Hardy Klangghammar. Though he was singing the national anthem as loudly and bravely as he could, he couldn't help tapping his feet and clicking his fingers to the mysterious funky sound that was seeping into his helmet, and seemed to be coming from directly ahead. From Klanghammar!

"Niet! Niet!" Screamed Boristovski and drowned out the sound. He opened the throttle further and screamed across the sky, his two wingmen in tow. This time, Klangghammar, you will not be so clever...

But he was. Klangghammar could now see the three tiny MiGs about a mile off, thundering towards him out of the sun. A deadly game of aerial chicken was about to begin, and Klangghammar wasn't about to back down. His mind cast back to when he was a small child, and would play chicken against his friends with petrol tankers. He always used to win, and this wasn't any different. Slowly, and with a malicious smile on his face, he cranked the throttle to maximum power...

Boristovski was starting to lose his cool. The Thunderhawk was now accelerating directly towards them at an incredible 2000 knots, and was showing no signs of turning. But Boristovski had always been taught that the Americans were cowards... surely Klangghammar would swerve at the last minute?

Klangghammar, now just a few thousand feet away from the advancing MiGs let loose a short burst of the chain gun, and two-hundred mercury-tipped hollow-points turned one of the MiGs to a flaming wreck that fell out of the sky like a dead bird. Boristovski and his remaining wingman, flinched but pushed on. Surely he would swerve at the last minute...?

With just a hundred feet between Klanghammar and the two MiGs, Boristovski bottled it like the borscht-guzzling yellowbelly he was, and tried to swerve to avoid the inevitable collision. But the other MiG tried the same maneouvre at the same time, and the two planes crashed into each other and exploded in a ball of white flame. Klangghammar, completely calm, flew through the fireball and, through the cockpit window, saw Boristovski falling, screaming through the air below him, his helmet melting with the intense heat around his head. Their eyes met for a moment and Klangghammar extended his middle finger and smiled in one last farewell gesture.

Boristovski hit the ground and his evil little communist body shattered in a second. His standard pilot's issue pistol,

(Continued from page 115)

loosed off an incorrectly loaded round.Skywards.

As Klangghammar hovered over the combat zone and surveyed the destruction he had created, his almost superhuman hearing detected a frantic whistling above the now gentle hum of the Thunderhawk.

A second later the rogue bullet struck the chopper's tail-rotor, sending it into a frantic spin generally regarded as fatal by even the most skilled and dog-nuts pilots. In the subsequent G-heavy spin and impact with the ground, even Klangghammar's toughness was put sorely to the test and, sustaining compression breaks to 80% of his vertabrae, cuts from flying glass and concussion, he passed out.

QUESTIONS

The sweet smell of cooking meat was hardly the first thing Klangghammar expected to notice as he came round. On realising, however, that the smell was coming from the smouldering blistered flesh of his own chest, and the cooking implement was a particularly expensive Cuban cigar. Klangghammar couldn't help but allow himself a wry smile. "Starting gently, eh?"

"Keep quiet, you steenking infidel capitalist peeg," rasped the half-man, half-rhino found at the other end of the stogie. "You weel be crushed under the mightee boot of brave drug-delerious communist oil philosophy! But wee weel not let you die slowly. Oh, no, Meester Not So Clever Now. Eet weel probably take weeks before your heart gives out under the eentense pointy sticky stabby torture we have lined up for you."

Klangghammar laughed and spat a thick blob of gristly phelgm at the shadowy figure. It hit him square in the face and trickled down his cheek. The figure smiled and wiped the spittle away, then leaned forward and let Klangghammar see his face. It was the shock of his life.

Grinning at him from behind a cracked pair of sunglasses and a set of hideously brown teeth was Manuel Costa Rica Alberto Fandango! The vicious dealer and international mercenary who had not only been responsible for the eye-watering atrocities suffered by Klangghammar and hundreds of his fellow POWs in Vietnam (Fandango was on the NVA's payroll as a freelance torturer at the time), but who had framed Klangghammar for a number of sexually-motivated murders that he, in fact, had committed.

"Fandango!" gasped Klangghammar. Fandango smiled and broke off a couple of the chopper pilot's fingernails with a pair of pliers. Klangghammar used special meditation techniques, taught to him by a Tibetan monk while on a Spec Ops mission to the Far East in 82, to suppress the intolerable pain.

"I regret that I weel have to leeeve you in the care of my men," sneered Fandango, and motioned towards two muscle-bound Iraqis, one carrying a car battery and set of jump leads, the other holding a tray of surgical instruments. The big motorised ones.

"I would have preferred to... see to you myself, but I have other eemportant beeesiness. The lovely Tania awaits me. I weeel be forcing her to build us an atomic deeevice, and when she is feeenished, I will be, how you say, having my leg over. When all our troops have had a go, we weeel be torturing her and keeeling her, and then we weeel drop her on the Whitehouse lawn. Har har har!"

Klangghammar wasn't really listening - he was too busy trying to reach the lockpick that had been surgically implanted into the palm of his hand, in case of eventualities like this. Fandango stubbed his cigar out on Klanghammar's arm and withdrew, and the two Iraqis began setting up their equipment. Klanghammar knew he must work fast if he was to get through the four-inch thick chain that was holding him on the operating table. If the Iraqis got to him first and began torturing him, he wouldn't be able to think clearly and that would be it. Work fast...

As the two Iraqis shared a vile joke and a yellowing cigarette before getting down to business, Klangghammar curled his hand round and started to dig into his wrist with his thumbnail. After a minute on intense scratching, the skin broke and a thin sliver of metal slid out. Klangghammar caught it and went to work on the padlock just by his hand. Must work fast... the Iraqis were now moving towards him, equipment in hand. Klangghammar worked frantically with the lockpick, and after a few more seconds, a quiet click told him that the lock had sprung open and his hand was free. Klangghammar tried to hide his expression of relief and remained inert, allowing the Iraqis to get closer, within striking range...

They stopped by the operating table and looked down at Klangghammar, smiling. "You are a dead man, Americanos," sneered one of them and produced from the tray of instruments an amputation saw. Now...

"Spin on this," screamed Klangghammar and propelled his fist upwards. It hit the bottom of the rotating saw and pushed it deep into the throat of the first Iraqi. He fell back, screaming and clutching at his throat, which was pumping out thick red blood in powerful, pulsing jets. The other Iraqi went for his belt holster, but Klangghammar, with his Delta Force training was too fast and had already picked the other locks. He lept up from the table at the screaming, cowardly Iraqi and knocked him to the floor, crying and begging for his life like a little girl. It was to do him no good - a second later, Klangghammar snapped his neck like a dry twig and stood up from the twitching body. Over in the corner, the other Iraqi had died from loss of blood, his face contorted into a grim death mask.

Klangghammar had no time to waste. He took each of the Iraqi's automatic pistols and chambered around into each. Time to kick some ass. Big time.

As Klangghammar threw open the twin doors from the torture room into the terrorist complex's main corridor, two guards, who were patrolling lazily at the other end, noticed him and fumbled frantically for their rifles, which were slung over their shoulders. The poor fools, thought Klanghammar as he raised his pistol and shot the two guards through the head from a distance of a hundred yards before they even reached their guns. The two bodies dropped and Klangghammar wasted no time in taking their rifles and ammunition. Unfortunately someone, somewhere had heard the shots and alarm klaxons began to sound all around the complex. "Dam,"hissed Klanghammar and, holding a rifle like a pistol in each hand, ran down the corridor, kicking in doors and looking inside for any signs of Tania along the way.

Elsewhere, soldiers were being dispatched around the complex, running this way and that. Fandango, who hadn't a clue what was going on, grabbed hold of a young sergeant.

"You," he barked. "What's going on?"

"The Americanos," hissed the sergeant, a hint of terror in his voice. Fandango noticed there was a damp, dark patch around the top of his trousers. "He escape!" Stunned, Fandango released the soldier, and he ran off down the corridor after his men. "So Klangghammar," he said with a grin that was barely detectable. "We meet again. For old times' sake." Fandango released the buckle clip on his belt holster and walked away down the corridor.

NINJITSU

A furious firefight was ensuing. Klangghammar was slugging it out across a corridor with twenty soldiers, who were constantly peppering the walls around him with machine gun fire. Klangghammar had originally been intercepted by a garrison of fifty soldiers, but thirty of them had already been downed by Klangghammar's crack marksmanship and a selection of exotic ninjitsu techniques. Now he was holed in behind this doorway, and there was no way out - more men would be arriving any minute, and he was down to his last clip. Klanghammar sent another burst of rifle fire screaming down the corridor and another four soldiers fell to the ground, blood pumping from their punctured bodies. There was another burst of fire from the enemy, and Klangghammar was forced back into the doorway for cover.

BEARS

He tried the door. Locked. Not even one of Klangghamar's famous shoulder-barges, from his days as-the Chicago Bears' Quarterback would open it. Knowing that he couldn't fight it out here for much longer, he jammed the rifle barrel into the keyhole and fired an extended burst. The hot lead ripped the lock completely off and the door swung open. Klanghammar fell inside as another volley of 9mm shells impacted around him.

He was inside a cell. The window was barred, there was straw on the floor and the walls were dank and scarred from years of people trying to scratch their way out, with little success. But the cell did have one interesting feature - slumped in the corner of the room ,weeping and with her hands held feebly over her head as if to protect herself, was Tania. Recognising her instantly, Klangghammar ran over to her and tried to help her up, but she fought him off, kicking and screaming.

"Relax!" he said, trying to calm her down. "I'm here to rescue you. The name's Klangghammar Hardy Klangghammar," he said. He was glad he had changed his name all those years ago. Somehow, "The name's Dwayne Ponsonby-Farquah" didn't have quite the same ring. "Come on," he said. "We don't have much time."

GOD

Tania seemed to calm down and Klangghammar managed to get her to her feet. He brushed her matted hair away from her face and lifted her face to look at her. God, she was beautiful. Her face like a pink silk pillow with two big blue jems embroided into it. Her body was enough to drive any man to drink and home again. Even Klangghammar was speechless for a few moments, before the shouting of the approaching guards outside snapped him out of it. He threw Tania to the floor, where she would be safe, and drew back the bolt on his assault rifle. As the soldiers piled into the cell, Klangghammar let rip and tore into the unsuspecting foreigners. One by one they fell screaming to the floor until Klangghammar ran out of ammo and drop the rifle to the floor. The soldiers were still advancing - some tripped and fell on the bodies of their dead comrades, but a good dozen of them had made it through safely, and were now only milliseconds away from turning Klangghammar and Tania into five hundred pounds of ground beef.

But Klangghammar had come too far to give up now. He knew that to throw in the towel just when he was on the brink of rescuing Tania and saving the free world from the power-grabbing commies and their powder-sniffing playmates would be to let not only his country down, but to let himself down as well. With a blood-curdling scream that the unfortunate fascists would take to their graves, Klangghammar lept at the body of guards, killing three instantly with a series of compilicated silent nerve-pinches that only a handful of people outside of Japan were trained to do. Without any formal military training to fall back on, the remaining soldiers panicked and opened fire blindly, inadvertently killing a further seven with their own bullets. As the last few ran around in disarray, Klangghammar took a rifle from one of the corpses and spread their innards around the cell. The last body, blood flooding from his mouth, fell to the floor as the echo of gunfire quietened, and then there was silence again. Klangghammar coughed and fanned away the gunsmoke, then grabbed Tania and pulled her up. "Let's get outta here", he said. A rescue isn't complete unless someone says "Let's get outta here".

Klangghammar led Tania through the smoke-filled and burning corridors, being careful to step over the scores of corpses which littered the floors as far as the eye could see in every direction. There was no mistaking Klangghammar's handiwork.

After some more searching, Klangghammar and Tania stumbled out into the daylight and looked across the tarmac to find - to his amazement - the Thunderhawk, fully repaired, fuelled and ready to go! Fandango must have planned to use it to drop his foul cargo on DC, Klangghammar thought as he dragged the terrified Tania across the tarmac towards the Thunderhawk. He took a slim,back remote control unit from his pocket and hit a button. "Ignition", he said into the unit's tiny inbuilt microphone, and a second later the Thunderhawk's rotors started to turn slowly as the turbines fired up with a high-pitched whining sound.

Alarm sirens were still sounding all around the camp, and Klangghammar noticed that, from across the compound, a fresh garrison of soldiers were running towards them, machine-guns blazing. Klangghammar caught a couple of bullets in the chest, but shrugged them off and continued sprinting at Olympic speed - he hadn't won those seven gold medals for nothing, and it was good to see that he still had the old magic. As he ran he pulled his pistol and picked off a couple of the distant enemies, then stopped by the side of the helicopter, which was now up to speed and ready to take off. "Get in," he said. Tania didn't need much persuading and climbed into the passenger seat without a word. Klangghammar ran round to the other side, catching a few more bullets in the process. As he opened the door to climb in, the first soldier to reach him jumped on his back and tried to wrestle him to the ground. Without any effort, Klangghammar just lifted him up above his head and let the razor-sharp rotor blades to all the work for him.

When the young soldier finally stopped kicking, Klangghammar dropped his mangled body to the ground, paused for a second to wipe the blood and innards from the windshield and climbed inside. The rest of the soldiers were almost on them, and just as two or three of them made a grab for the side of the helicopter, it took off and hovered above them. Machine-gun fire ricocheted harmlessly off the titanium hull. Klangghammar was getting tired of this. He held down the right mouse button and the self-aiming 60mm chain gun opened fire, cutting through the garrison of helpless soldiers like a laser beam through melted butter. There wasn't much screaming. Klangghammar had fired over a thousand rounds in the last five seconds. He released the trigger button and turned the helicopter west. "We're headed home," he said through the cockpit mike.

PIG

But just as the Thunderhawk flew over the compound barrier and into neutral territory, Klangghammar heard the scuffle from behind him and turned to see Fandango, in the back seat, with his arm round Tania's neck and a .45 automatic pressed to her forhead. "Turn the chopper around, seeeenor Klangghammar," he squealed like a stuck pig. "And no tricks or the beeetch gets it." Klangghammar had no choice but to obey. He pushed the mouse back around towards the camp. "When we get back, I ham going to have my fun with theees nice girly, and I ham going to make you watch. How you like that, seeenor scum?" sneered Fandango. He was so pleased with himself that he hadn't noticed Klangghammar unclip the flaregun from the door panel and cock it silently.

"Sounds like a riot," said Klangghammar and fired the flare gun through the back of his own chair and right into Fandango's crotch. The greasy commie screamed in agony as his private parts were flame-grilled by the distress flare and he dropped his gun. Klangghammar saw his chance and kicked Fandango hard in the side, sending him flying out of the side of the helicopter. They were ten thousand feet up.

"Klaaaaanngghhaaaammmaaaarrr!" screamed Fandango as he plummeted to the ground, his groin still ablaze. From the copter window, Klangghammar saw Fandango, unfortunate to the last, land on top of a passing petrol tanker, which promptly exploded. "I guess that's what they call poetic justice," said Klangghammar as he targetted the distant terrorist compound on his HUD and locked on a AMRAAMSLAM missile. When the blips in his helmet speaker turned into a steady tone, Klanghammar hit the left mouse button and saw a single smoke trail arc from the low-slung multiple missile bay of the Thunderhawk into the distance. A few seconds later there was a loud explosion, and a white mushroom cloud appeared over the horizon. "Mission accomplished," Klangghammar smiled, then cranked the radio to maximum volume and turned the helicopter towards home.

As the familiar sight of the White House dome came into view, Klangghammar felt a shooting pain in his arm. He looked at his watch: 23:57 and ticking - he had only a few minutes to get back to base before the poison exploded his heart and took his life. Sweating profusely, Klangghammar opened the throttle and pushed forward - but his vision was already starting to black out, and a glance a the fuel guage told him he was down to fumes. Seconds later, the rotors started to clunk and grind as the engine, deprived of gas, started to die out. "Hold on," he gasped. "This could be rough..."

CRASH!

Much to the surprise of the President, his morning paper-signing session was very rudely interrupted as the 175-tonne Thunderhawk crashed through the White House dome and onto the carpet of the Oval Office, right in front of his desk. The engine spluttered feebly for a few moments and then died. The rotors groaned to a halt and the door fell open. Moments later out fell Klangghammar and Tania, onto the debris-covered carpet. Two armed MPs rushed in, but the President motioned to them to lower their guns. He has recognised his daughter.

Moments later, Jack Marshall rushed in (he had popped round for a cuppa a few hours earlier) and broke into a broad smile when he saw Klangghammar and the girl. When he saw Klangghammar writhing around on the floor, grabbing his throat and spitting blood, he remembered the poison and quickly ran over to him. He produced a disposable syringe from his jacket pocket and injected the contents into Klangghammar's arm. "There," he said.

Ten minutes later, Klangghammar, Tania, the President and Jack Marshall were standing around the wreckage of the Thunderhawk enjoying a Coke together. "How can I ever than you," said Tania, her blues eyes ablaze with passion. Klangghammar stepped forward and put his bandaged arms around her. "You could marry me," he suggested. "Okay," said Tania, "but we'll have to make it quick. I've got a swimwear shoot in Antigua at four, and then I've got to run back and help those NASA guys work some bugs out of their dead-pulsar-detection software." With that they kissed, everyone applauded and the President led everyone in a chorus of "For he's a jolly good fellow."For Hardy Klangghammar, that had never been more true.

THE END

Next Month:

Potting and Passion in

Love on the Green Baize

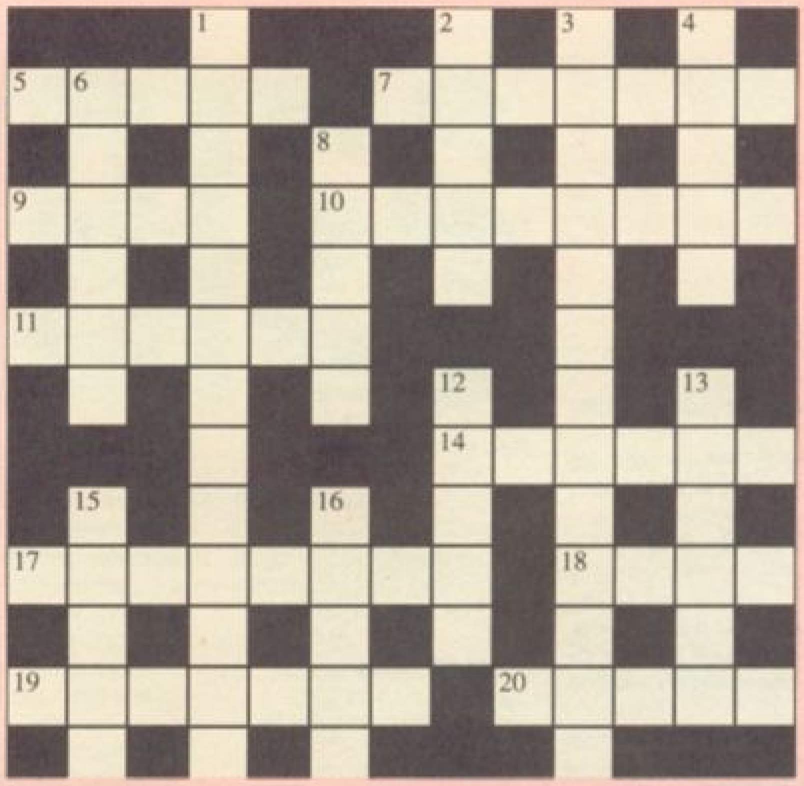
inspired by Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker.

ACE

+WORD

PUZZLE PRIZES

If you're the sender of the first correct crossword solution out of the hat, you'll get a free game for your machine. We regret that we cannot specify exact titles, but we'll do our utmost to ensure that the prizes get your adrenalin pumping. Don't forget to specify your machine format!



CLUES ACROSS

5 No charge to drop from 'Swords of Twilight' software house (4,4)
7 Kind of light wine one swallowed (4)
8 Changes code – Ed's put it in (5)
9 Elite game Leo and Dino played together (7)
10 Pa cures my new game from Virgin (9)
11 Being under twenty, she rules the game (4,5)
14 Rat torn to pieces in game (7)
15 Computer helping to write comic routing (5)
17 Loathe Gremlin game (4)
18 Everything shown by the runes I've cast (8)

CLUES DOWN

1 Flintstone's first from Ubi Soft (4)
2 Game that's a bit of a cult I'm assured (6)
3 Brown dog! (6)
4 Look out - leaders got Ron to form software house (8)
6 Be all-consuming! (3,2)
10 Clark Kent's translation of Ubermensch! (8)
11 Heighten general awareness about Domark subsidiary (6)
12 Duos rewriting after ex developed game from Origin Systems (6)
13 Banishment from Audiogenic (5)
16 A game of hazard from Leisure Genius (4)

HOW TO ENTER

Every month we offer a free game worth up to £25 for your machine if you're the sender of the first correct crossword solution out of the hat. The address to send your solution to is:

ACE September 91 Crossword,
Priory Court
Farringdon Lane
London
EC1R 3AU

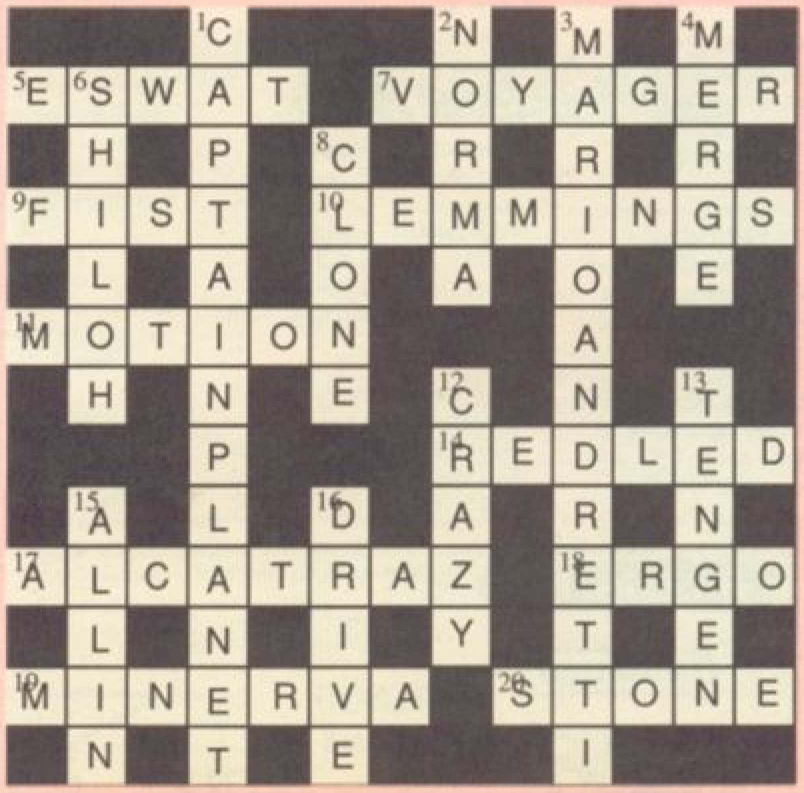
The deadline for entries is the first of the month but, as September 1st is a Sunday, entries received on Monday 2nd will be eligible.

JULY 91 RESULT

Winner of the July crossword was Patrick Stanley of London. August solution below – the winner will be announced next month.

Our monthly prize word puzzler, set by the inimitable MIPS

Make sure you don't miss next month's competition – it'll be the last! To find out why, and what will replace it, don't miss next month's issue!



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9F	I	S	T		10L	E	M	M	I	N	G	S
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			P				14R	E	D	L	E	D
	15A		L		16D		A		R		N	
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ACE READERS' PAGES

FOR SALE

PC ENGINE + JOYSTICK 4 games. formation soccer, slatterhouse, Ninja spirit, Gunhead £140 0233 627839

ATARI 520STFM 4 months old with over £1200 worth games + mouse joystick andmouse holder £400 Tel: 08907 71564.

ST AND PC games for sale or swap. All originals. PO Box 76 29952J Heerjansdam, Holland

ATARI 520STFM with £300 worth softare Inc Discovery Pack, F19, Populous, Falcon. VGC £300 ono Phone 081-852-3575 evenings.

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ATARI 520 STFM Power Pack Games plus many others. Joystick quick sale £220 Tel 0784-242554.

AMSTRAD 464 Colour monitor voice synthesiser three joysticks light pen, 100 + games £300 Tel: 081-981-9835

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SEGA MEGADRIVE Boxed good as new two joypads & 8 games £375 ono Tel: Daniel 081-445-3723 London

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HELPLINE

HELP NEEDED for starting Amiga energiser Club which buys, sells and exchanges your used original software desperately needs games to get started. Will pay good prices depending upon quality. For rough value telephone (0789) 764039 for exact price send disks with telephone number or SAE to : Amiga Energiser, Andrew Stanford 15 Fields Park Drive Alcester Warwicks Also D Paint 2 only £25

HELP desperately seeking Wing Commander 5.25: IBM Will trade Red Baron Sim City or others. Please contact Kevin (0249) 445025 106 Queens Cres. Chippenham Wilts SN14 0NP

HELP needed on Monkey Island I can;t get into the mansion write to Mattioli 2B Cranford Rd, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4UN

HELP given on many old and new adventure games send SAE for list Also C64 with disk drive Geos many games and Action replay 6 2 yrs old worth over £500 only £120 I am also looking to join a user group for the Amiga Anyone? Write to : Stephen Maughan, Timberton House, The Mount, Buckenham Tofts, Thetford, Norfolk.

CAN ANYONE TELL me the file structure of Deluxe paint 2 Picture files in IBM PC Also I would like to contact any Pascal C or 8086 programmers with view to forming Demo group Contact Lee Bochicchio 41 Pear Tree Ave Copull Lancashire or phone 0257-793150

HELP coder wanted for up and coming Amiga demo group. Have GFX musicians spreaders Ring 0282 815903 No lamers please.

"Console owners want the latest news, game reviews tips cheats and bugs then you need 'Electric brain" - the fanzine for Hi Tech game console owners. For a free sample copy send a large SAE to ONN Lee 125 Arnold Rd Bestwood Estate Nottingham We support most major console - including Megadtrive Super Famicon Gameboy and PC Engine (unlike other magfazines!!)

SWAP my LYNX with PSU and Calif Games for Gameboy plus Games (Herts) 0442-249031 Ask for Alex

I Have completed Wing Commander Kings Quest 5 Space Quest $ Leisure Suit Larry 2 and can offer help on Super Off Road, Zenon 2 Silent Sérvice 2 Red baron and Tean Yankee. Phone Anthony on 0246-434509 after 5 weekdays and anytime weekends.

PLEASE help solutions to Kings Quest 2 Zack McKracken Larry (1-3) Deja Vu I would be grateful if you could help.

Want help with games? I have cheats on disk Send SAE to 12 Dudley Rd Brighton E Sussex

HELP needed on rainbow Islands for finishing Level 1 Passing the spider Hisham Khalia, PO Box 5364 Minama Bahrain, Arabian Gulf

DESPERATELY trying to find Lynx with a few games willing to swap Nintendo G110 worth of games light gun two joypads Nes advantage joystick still boxed with manuals worth £210 If interested call or write to Philip Cohen Address 3 Peerage Way Emerson Park Hornchurch Essex Tel: 04024 42242

HELP WANTED on Zynaps infinite lives for Amiga Also any help for HATE have got loads of tips fore other gasmes If anyone wants the. Dave Moore 9 Edinburgh Way, Dersingham Kings Lynn PE31 6JJ

BIG IDIOT needs help in Delphines Future Wars Full solution would make me very happy Write toC Angell 10 Laggary Park, Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire, Scotland

STUCK in a game? Then I may be able to help. With over 100 cheats and so solutions for adventuures Send £1 + SAE to Daniel Moore 133 Cambridge Drive Ipswich IP2 9UN

HELP NEEDED desperately I am forming a new crew for the Atari ST and we intend to code games demos etc in 68000 machine code. I would appreciate any help in the way of source code, demos etc. or even tips and advive Contacts Also reeally needed Write now to Emmet Fitzpatrick Corkeeran Ballybay, Co Monaghan Ireland

SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD (PC & AM) and other games by D Puntel High reward Write M Koivula, Tiiranranta 7 01800 Klaukkala, Finland.

NEED TV Tuner for NEC GT PC Engine that will pick up TV stations in the UK Willing to swap either Columns, Operation Wolf Outrun or R-Type (All brand new in boxes just bought fromJapan. Write to Thomas Quinn at 76 Coventry RD Market, Harborough Leictesreshire LE16 9BZ or Phone 0858-410233 (9-5) Badly need so please hurry.

ATARI LYNX Fanzine needs writers artists Contact Lynx user 11 Montgomery Rd, Spencers Wood Reading RG7

GAMEBOY owners need games reviewing and rating want to know which are the best games to buy Please also send me tips Send 50 in stamps to Mark Brailsford, 29 Horndean Rd, Sheffield S5 Also urgently seeking tips for IBM PC games.

HELP needed (again) I need to get past the Beast in Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy. I can give help to anyone stuck in Planetfall too . Contact James Lyon, 18 barony Terrace Edinburgh 031-334-1713

NOTICE!

Unfortunately, due to piracy groups using the Penpals section, ACE have been forced to discontinue this part of the Readers Page. We apologise to genuine advertisers for any inconvenience. Any suspicious entries will be forwarded to the Federation of Free Traders who will take action against Pirates.

NOTICE!
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FREEBIES

More public domain play power from Pat Winstanley – and yet more unauthorised versions of old favourites...

NYET

PC – £4.00 – Shareware
Fantasia Shareware (GAM-107)

Tetris addicts are in for a treat with this apparent clone from Fantasia.

Just in case you've never seen Tetris the game involves manipulating falling coloured shapes. Each piece can be rotated and moved left or right, the idea being to position the shape so that when it reaches the bottom of the well, the place it settles helps to create a solid line of colour from one side to the other.

Sounds simple? It isn't. You have no choice of which shapes will come or in what order so some frantic manipulations ensue while stacking unwanted (for the moment) shapes out of the way.

If the stack of shapes reaches the top of the screen you've lost. Each time you manage a coloured line, that line is removed from the screen, allowing shapes above to drop down. This often produces a completely different set of gaps to be filled and and necessitates a rapid tactical rethink.

Although not precisely 'state of the art', the game is simple to play with a good choice of keys. Left and right are operated by 'J' & 'L' while the the 'K' key in between rotates the shape. Tapping the spacebar accelerates the fall of the shape. Colours aren't too bad either (the KCS (Amiga) PC Emulator displays eight) but although there is a toggle for sound, I couldn't get a squeak out of the game.

This is the sort of program which either grabs or it doesn't. Personally I find it a little tedious but a friend is utterly hooked. Either way it's not too expensive to give it a try.

GAMES II

Amiga – £1.50 &50p post – PD
Vally PD

When a PD disk arrives with simply a reference number it's worth jotting a note down on the label to say what the game is about. My note for this disk was "Ol' Timers".

ACE FREEBIES WORKS!

ACE knows this column actually results in more sales for participating libraries - at least one has had to be rescued from under the deluge of extra mail. So why, we wonder, do we have to put so much effort into locating suitable software? If you're running a library and want to boost your business, phone Steve Cooke on 071 251 6222 for information about editorial coverage in this section.

The disk consists of six programs including beautiful (but presumably unlicensed) conversions of Space Invaders, Missile Command, Qix and Galaxian together with a couple of puzzle games. Each is a good game in its own right and as the disk as a whole is superb value. (Although it's a shame that it appears to have been put together by software thieves – heaven knows what Atari et al think of this sort of thing.)

Newcomers to computing will be able to find out what the old hands are referring to when discussing ancient history and those who lost their old favourites through upgrading will find plenty of nostalgia.

POM POM GUNNER

Amiga – £1.10 & 50p post – PD
Vally PD

Mindless blasting seems to have gone out of fashion these days with all the strategic elements which pepper recent shoot-em-ups. With this in mind I was pleased to find this disk in a bundle sent recently.

Set in the 2nd World War, you man an American Pom Pom gun during a Japanese air attack. As aircraft fly across the screen in pseudo 3D, the joystick controls your gunsight and the fire button your trigger. And that's about all there is to the game – but it ain't half fun.

The backdrops and planes are digitised. Despite an annoying flickering band at the bottom of the screen, atmosphere is well maintained by both graphics and sound. With such simplicity the temptation is to annihilate anything that moves – but that's not a totally good idea as I discovered when I was ticked off for shooting two friendly planes out of the sky.

If you're looking for something not too easy but taking little in the way of thought power this is an excellent contender.

FLOWER POWER

Amiga (1Mb) – £3.50 – Licenseware
AMOS PD Library (LPD27)

Len Tucker's at it again with yet another highly imaginative game. This one's really for kids but the adults who have seen it usually end up having a go too.

The aim is to grow and pick flowers while avoiding assorted nasties in the garden. Each level demands more and more flowers to be grown as the minimum entry for the local flower show.

As befits its adventure style, the gameplay sees you controlling the gardener in his task with various jobs to be tackled in order to nurture nature.

Digging a plot is followed by the planting of seeds. But seeds need to be watered to grow, and the watering can needs regular refills. If you become too distracted by the marauding garden pests and forget to water the plants they will start to droop. Only when beautiful blooms are evident may you pick the flowers and deposit them in the collecting basket.

SHAMELESS PLUGS!

Software supplied by:
Vally PD – 091-587 1195 (Amiga), PO Box 15, Peterlee, Co. Durham, SR8 1NZ
Amiganuts United – 0703 785680 (Amiga) 169 Dale Valley Road Hollybrook Southampton SO1 6QX
Riverdene PDL – 0734 452416 (Amiga), 30a School Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG3 5AN
Adventurers PDL – 0785 44227 (ST) 32 Merrivale Road Rising Brook Stafford ST17 9EB
Fantasia Shareware – 0761 221585 (PC/Mac) PO Box 1254 Compton Martin Bristol BS18 6JX

Pests range from growling dogs to giant ladybirds, and all of them will eat your seeds and young plants if they are allowed close enough. There's no killing involved though – simply shake your fist and emit a Kung-Fu style war cry to scare the beasties away.

Animation is simple but effective and the graphics generally reflect the targeted child player. One touch which always tickles me is the way the gardener looks as though he's doing a "Prince William" while operating the watering can. The entire game is joystick controlled and frantic without being too anxious to kill you off.

MEGABALL

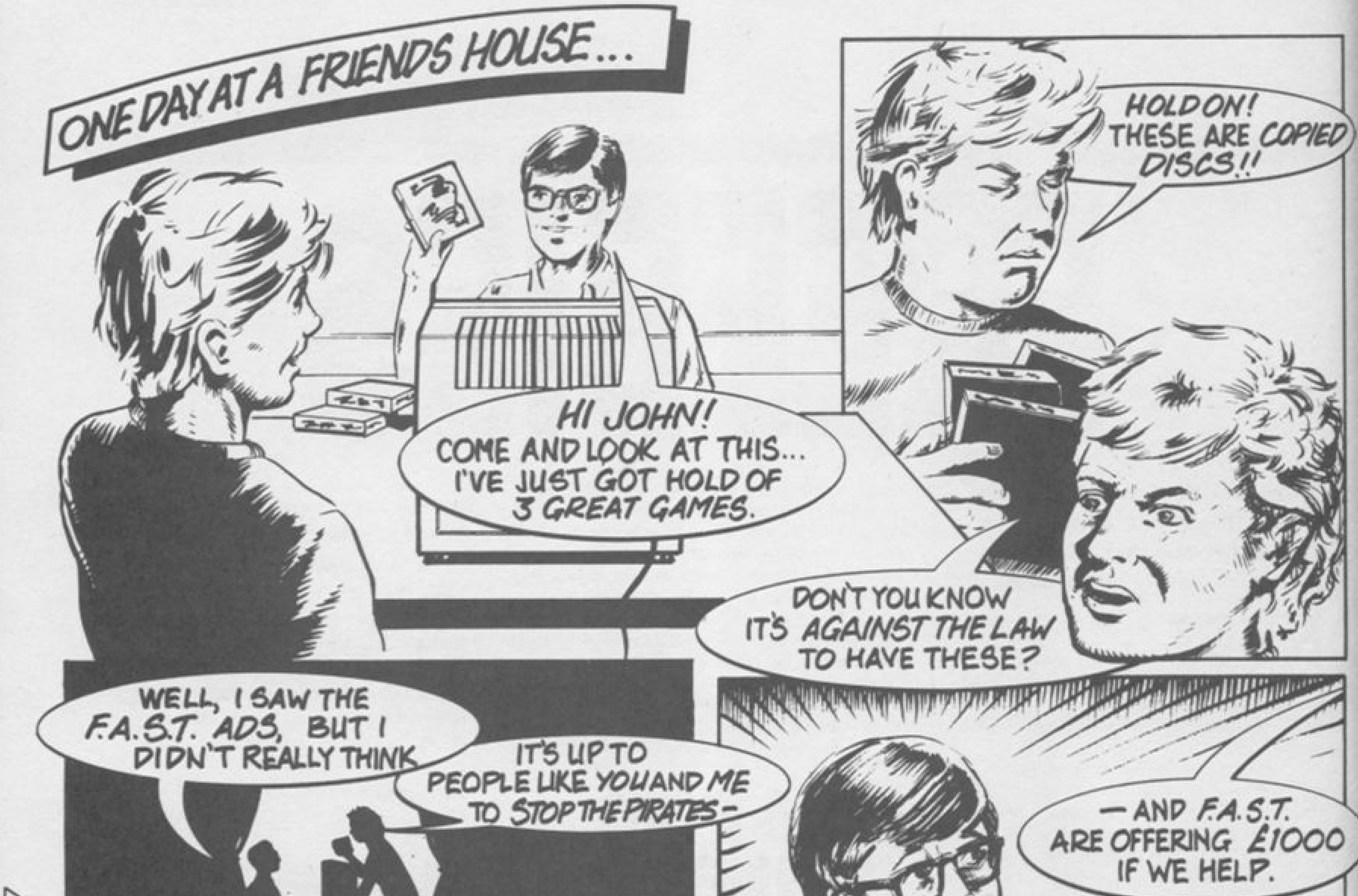
Amiga – £2.50 – PD
Riverdene (GAM906AM)

One of my all time favourite games has to be Breakout and Megaball is one of the best clones around. It's so good that even creaking under pressure of work I had to play for a whole afternoon – just to test it, you understand.

Although gameplay is pretty standard – hit the ball with your bat to take out all the bricks in the wall – the features included in this version make for a whole new scenario. All the old favourites are there of course – bombs, glue, shrink, expand and so on, but you also have icons which toggle tunes, turn your bat into a high powered laser, take out solid bricks or slice through them like butter. Invisible bricks cause chaos too.

With all this to contend with you tend to forget about the ball altogether. Who cares where it is when you have just made a double-elongated bat and can't move sideways far enough to avoid the bomb now on its inexorable way towards you. Highly recommended for all ages and reflexes.

See you next month!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TELEPHONE 071-497 8973

PIRACY IS THEFT

ACE DIARY

AUGUST 1991

11-17th July SOFTWARE RELEASES

GBH: *Super Cars* (ST, Amiga £7.99). Re-released top-down racing game in futuristic setting. Further oldies from the Gremlin back catalogue to be released this week: *Impossamole* (ST, Amiga £7.99). *Footballer of the Year 2* (ST, Amiga £7.99). *Kid Gloves* (originally from Millenium – ST, Amiga £7.99). *Cloud Kingdoms* (also ex-Millenium – ST, Amiga £7.99).

Mindscape: *Blue Max* (ST £30.99). Air combat in World War I. *Das Boot* (ST £30.99). Submarine simulation.

Mindcraft/Electronic Arts: *Keys to Maramon* (Amiga £25.99). 360/Electronic Arts: *Armour Alley* (PC £29.99). Interplay/Electronic Arts: *Battlechess 2* (Amiga £25.99). Graphically-led chess game where the pieces actually materialise and fight one another for possession of the squares.

Ubi Soft: *Fast Lane* (PC £29.99). Five racing games: *Stunt Car Racer, Hard Drivin, Vite, Ferrari Formula One* and *Chicago 90*.

Empire: *Space 1889* (PC £29.99).

Sunday 11
Motor Racing: Hungarian Formula One Grand Prix in Budapest - can Nigel Mansell make up some of the deficit on Ayrton Senna?

Monday 12
Cricket: Final Day of the Fifth Test between England and West Indies, at The Oval. The grouse shooting season opens.

Tuesday 13

Wednesday 14

Thursday 15

Friday 16
Birthday of Madonna, in 1958.

Saturday 17
Anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence, Indonesia. Football: First Saturday of the 1991-92 Barclays league season.

18-24th August SOFTWARE RELEASES

Cinemaware: *Double Double Bill* (Amiga £35.99). *TV Sports Football, TV Sports Baseball, Wings* and *Lords of the Rising Sun*, all in one package.

Mirror Image: *Sinbad* (ST, Amiga, PC £9.99). *Conflict Europe* (ST, Amiga, PC £9.99).

Image Works/Konami: *Bill Elliots' NASCAR Racing*. (ST, Amiga £35.99). Motor racing game in Indy 500 style.

Electronic Arts: *Powermonger Clue Book* (£7.50). Hints, tips and tactics for *Powermonger* addicts. *EA Hockey* (Sega Megadrive £39.99): Ice hockey action game. *Battlechess* (CD-TV, price TBA).

Psygnosis: *Amnios* (ST, Amiga £25.99). Pilot your craft around several planets, destroy anything that moves, marvel at the graphics along the way. Psygnosis Sizzlers: *Blood Money* (Amiga £7.99, PC £9.99).

Empire: *Megatraveller 2* (PC £30.64). Follow-up to acclaimed strategy game (though it hardly seems a week since MT1 hit the streets).

Sunday 18
1959: the first Mini, produced by the British Motor Corporation, was unveiled today.

Monday 19

Tuesday 20

Wednesday 21

Thursday 22
The new law allowing pubs to stay open all day took effect on this day in 1988. Cricket: test match, England vs Sri Lanka, begins at Lords'.

Friday 23
Liberation Day, Romania. Middlesex County Council announced plans to open a new type of school, called 'comprehensive', on this day in 1948.

Saturday 24
Athletics: World Championships begin in Tokyo.

25-31st August SOFTWARE RELEASES

Image Works: *Xenon 2: Megablast* (CD-TV, price TBA). The graphics, the scrolling, and most importantly, the music, all on Amiga CD. *Falcon* (CD-TV, price TBA). Flight sim with heavy emphasis on realistic controls. Spectrum Holobyte: *Flight of the Intruder* (Amiga £30.99).

Mindcraft/Electronic Arts: *Rules of Engagement* (Amiga £25.99).

Lankhor/Ubi Soft: *Maupiti Island* (ST, Amiga £25.99). Ubi Soft: *Ironlord* (PC £29.99). Graphically-led mediaeval saga. *Winning Five* (ST, Amiga £25.99). Compilation comprising *Ironlord, Night Hunter, Twin Worlds, Puffy* and *Sir Fred*. *Pro Tennis Tour 2* (PC £29.99). About the nearest you can get to the real thing on computer at the moment.

Activision: *Beast Busters* (ST, Amiga £25.99). Defeat the zombies investing the city centre. *F-14 Tomcat* (PC £35.99). Flight sim based on plane featured in Top Gun.

Sunday 25
Motor Racing: Belgian Formula One Grand Prix at Spa.

Monday 26
Bank Holiday England and Wales. Tennis: US Open begins in New York. Anniversary of first BBC transmission of TV pictures using both images and sound, in 1936.

Tuesday 27

Wednesday 28

Thursday 29

Friday 30

Saturday 31
National Day, Malaysia National Day, Trinidad and Tobago.

1-7 September SOFTWARE RELEASES

Domark: *James Bond Collection* (ST, Amiga £29.99). Compilation comprising *Licence to Kill, Live and Let Die* and *Spy Who Loved Me*. *Thunderjaws* (ST, Amiga £24.99, PC £29.99). Underwater mayhem with mutant sharks and the like in Tengen coin-op conversion, delayed from originally scheduled July release.

Mindcraft/Electronic Arts: *Magic Candle 2* (PC £29.99). Fantasy role-playing as you explore the dreaded domain of Gurtex. *Zone Warrior* (ST, Amiga £25.99). Platform game with five time-travel scenarios and plenty of mazes and puzzles en route.

Gremlin: *Pegasus* (ST, Amiga £25.99). Airborne shoot 'em up on horseback (!).

Lankhor/Ubi Soft: *Vroom* (£24.99). Racing game. Ubi Soft: *Music Master* (ST, Amiga, PC £34.99 - ST and PC with sound cartridge £44.99). Tutorial and composer package.

Empire: *Twilight 2000* (PC £30.99). Tank simulation. Deathbringer (ST, Amiga, PC £30.99). Multi-screen arcade-style game with you as Karn, man with a sword and a mission to wreak havoc.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 1
All Formats Computer Fair arrives in Leeds, at the University Sports Centre. Doors open 10.00am; Contact number for organisers: 0225 868100. Athletics: Final Day of World Championships in Tokyo.

Monday 2

Tuesday 3
1967: Sweden switched from driving on the left, to driving on the right hand side of the road. How?

Wednesday 4

Thursday 5

Friday 6
The UK industry's biggest exhibition, the Computer Entertainment Show opens at Earl's Court 2, London at 9.00am. Phone the information hotline on (0839) 500820 for details.

Saturday 7
ECES continues, plus All Formats fair in Victoria (info from the organisers on. 0225 868100).

THE BLITTER END

PLUS CA CHANGE

Ho! Ho! Our request for bogus game scenarios last month had us rolling in the aisles for, well, at least five minutes. The winner, after considerable debate, has to be M. Furnival of Runcorn, whose entry kept us chuckling the longest:

Mr Furnival's spec for *Penultimate Brawl III™* introduced the hideous possibility of virtual reality beat-em-ups, featuring two game modes: '...TOTAL WEAKLING – lots of places to hide until those nasty men go away (or) SLOBBERING MANIAC – nowhere to hide, but who cares...you're there to eat human flesh!'

The game kicks off (literally) as you 'Don your headset...and watch in horror as a gang of roughnecks break bottles over the head of your girl.'

'Good luck!' exhorts the blurb, '...and let's be careful out there!' Well done, MF, your game is on its way. And an honourable mention to Nick Oldfield who managed to come up with a scenario that punned on literally dozens of well-known games.

*

And now for a mega compo because, as you'll find out below, Blitter is departing ACE this month after four years of (mostly) faithful service. He reckons you deserve something a little bit special for putting up with him, and here it is...

ACE is mounting the Advancing Computer Entertainment conference at the ECES in Earls Court in September (on the 5th and 6th, to be precise). At the time of writing, this conference will give games enthusiasts the unique chance of meeting and hearing from such luminaries as Chris 'Balance of Power' Crawford, Brian 'Beyond Zork' Moriarty, and a host of others. This is a serious affair – perhaps the first professional computer games design conference ever held in Europe – and the entry price reflects this: £65 for two days, eight speakers, lunch, and a panel session.

If you think that's pricey, remember that equivalent events cost at least £200 to enter and usually much more. However, we recognise that for some ACE readers this sort of cash is out of the question, so Blitter is stepping in with a unique chance for five lucky chaps (or chappesses) to get in for a duck. If you win, you'll be rubbing shoulders with some of the biggest names in showbusiness.

So here's your chance. Simply write down on a postcard the name of the game you consider to be the best designed program you've ever played, and then tell us why you chose it. The five tickets will go to the five entries that demonstrate to us the keenest design sense – you don't have to be literate, abel to spel, or even funny – we just want five people who REALLY think they know what makes a good game, and who can tell us what, in their opinion, that X-factor is. Get to it! The address for entries is:

ACE Blitter Good Bye Compo
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London
EC1R 3AU

...and the deadline for entries is August 30th. You MUST also include your daytime or evening telephone number for contact, just in case you win!

For many of you, especially those of you involved in entertainment media, this conference is really too important to miss. You can book a ticket by telephoning Steve Cooke or Sarah Ewing on 071 251 6222 for details. Attendance is strictly limited and interest is already running very high, so get in touch soon if you don't want to miss out.

*

And so farewell, after 48 issues. Blitter can exclusively reveal that ACE was originally going to be called Blitter (yes, it's true) but a last minute decision went for ACE instead, *with Blitter being reserved for the final page.*

Early Blitters make pretty ironic reading – the first reported how Durell Software's latest astrology program had predicted that the company would get into financial trouble. The company disappeared soon afterwards. In the second issue, Stuart Bell and Wild Bill Stealey of Microprose are seen cutting a celebratory cake together – later they were cutting each other as Bell stormed off to start Electronic Zoo. Then it was Telecomsoft and Hewson going to court – now both of them are off the case. Plus ca change...

...And the games....Blitter particularly enjoyed Impact (the Arkanoid derivative), Plutos (an early ST two-handed shoot'em'up), Bonecruncher from Superior, Ultima V, Cosmic Osmo (while it lasted), Lurking Horror (what other game has had rats *'chittering' in it?), Beyond* Zork and, more recently, Martian Dreams. Old readers will always be welcome at the Sunnyside Home for Retired Hacks, but watch out for that bedpan...

● ***Blit Blit!***

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

Next month we're launching the 5th Year of ACE with news of some major advances in magazine technology! We're not giving anything away, but get next month's ACE for the full story! Plus...

- **The Gremlin conference: check out the current games in development at the home of the hottest racing sims around...**
- **Exclusive pre-ECES show reports...**
- **...And a host of surprises. Don't miss it!**

Dear Newsagent,

You may not have noticed, but I'm a damn slight quicker on the fire button than your average Joe. My exalted gamesplaying status demands nothing but the best, so please reserve me a copy of the world's hottest computer entertainment magazine: ACE.

PS ACE is out on the 8th of every month.

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CD-I EXCLUSIVE!

Next month brings ACE readers a red hot exclusive that could take the lid off the future of home entertainment systems. We've all heard endlessly about CD-I, but now Philips have invited us for an in-depth tour of the European software development labs in Dorking. We'll be able to tell you in detail about the sort of games you'll be playing when the system launches next year, how it compares with CDTV, how much it's likely to cost and – the nitty gritty – whether it's worth saving up those pennies for...

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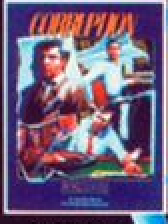

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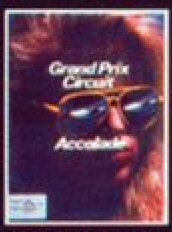

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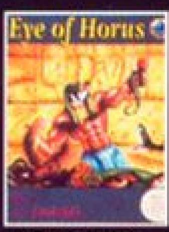

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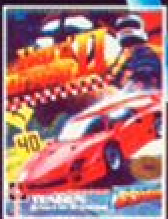

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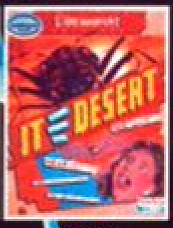

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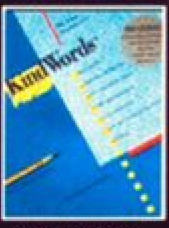

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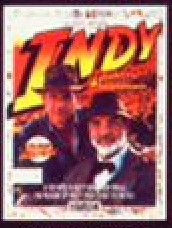

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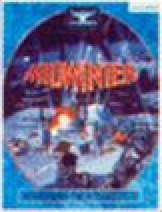

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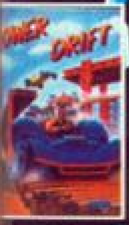

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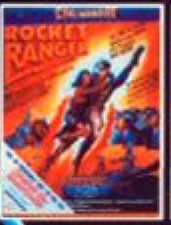

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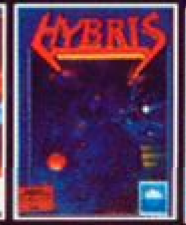

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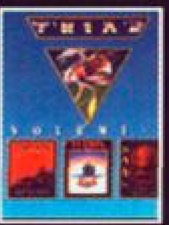

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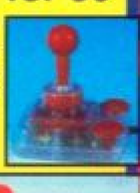

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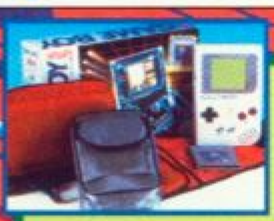

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